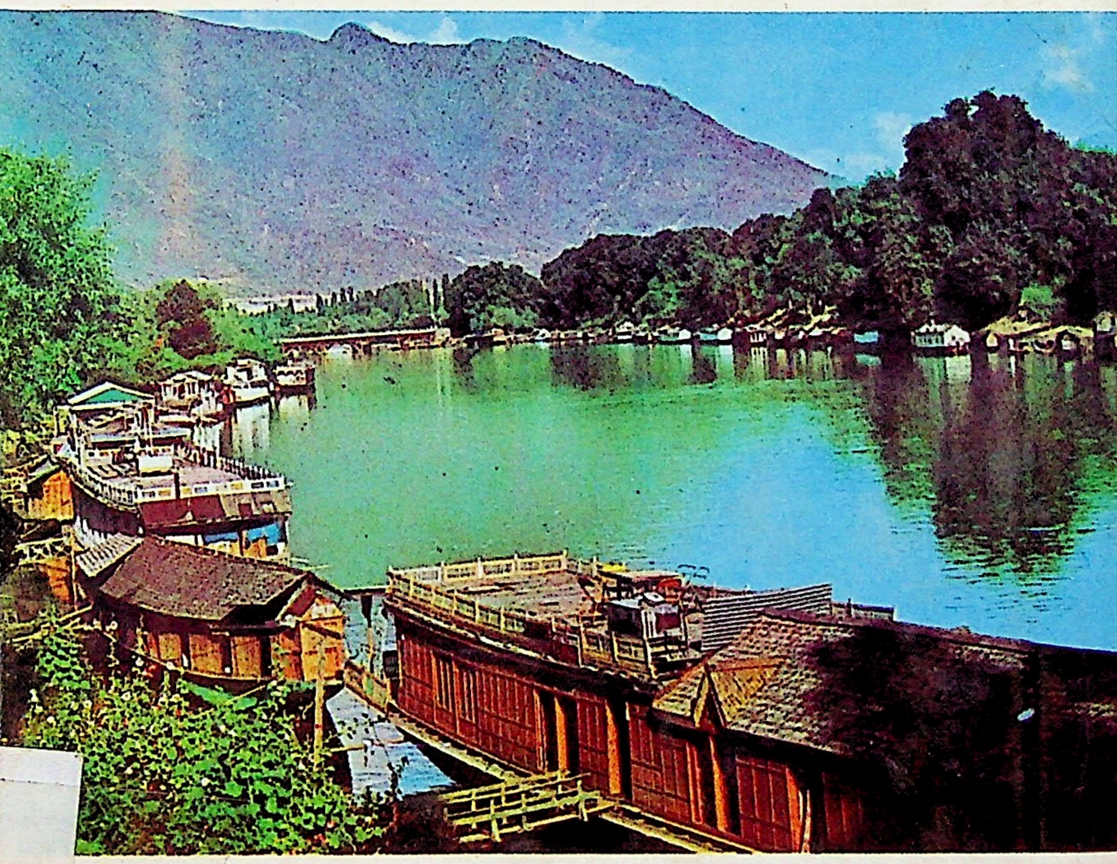
CULTURE AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF KASHMIR

Volume 2
Medieval Kashmir



P.N.K. Bamzai

ABOUT THE BOOK

The number of books written on Kashmir is legion. Most of them deal with the natural beauty of this "Paradise on Earth". However, little has been written on the people whose life and history are equally interesting for they have given to humanity thought and craft that added to its dignity, elegance and colour.

Kashmir has the unique distinction of having a long tradition of historical records, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* being the sole history in Sanskrit literature. But these records follow the usual mode of presenting a list of kings, queens and their ministers or an account of their expeditions to neighbouring principalities. There is hardly any mention of the people who inhabit the land.

But in recent years the study of history has undergone a sea change. A book written on the old pattern which would barely mention Asoka the Great or Lalitaditya and his ephemeral empire would be as incomplete as those which ignore the social setting of political and intellectual history.

This book has been written with the object of giving a comprehensive story of Kashmir revolving round the common man's political, social and cultural life from prehistoric times to the present day.

Situated in a sensitive geo-political region where recently terrorism has raised its ugly head, Kashmir has attracted world attention. The genesis of this malady has been dealt with in detail. It is hoped the book will help the reader to understand the situation with all its ramifications.

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Volume Two

MEDIEVAL KASHMIR

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THE SULTANATE

[1339—1586]

MUGHAL RULE

[1586—1753]

AFGHAN SATRAPY

[1753—1819]

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FOUNDATION OF THE SULTANATE

The rise of Islam is a marvel of history. Born in the beginning of the seventh century AD it enveloped, a century later, a vast stretch of territory extending from the Atlantic to the Indus and from the Caspian to the Cataracts of the Nile, including spain and Portugal, some of the most fertile regions of France, the whole of the northern coast of Africa, Upper and Lower Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Persia, Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Transoxiana.

By the beginning of the eighth century of the Christian era the Arabs had carried their arms as far as the western confines of India and bore sway in Makaran. Simultaneously they brought under their rule the whole of Central Asia, threatening the empire of China from there and penetrating to the kingdom of Kabul.

Early Contact with Islam

Geographically situated as it was, Kashmir did not fall in their line of advance, but we find that during the reign of Karkota dynasty of Kashmir. The Arabs were becoming a source of serious menace to the Kashmir kingdom. First Chandrapida and then the great king Lalitaditya, through their embassy to the Chinese court asked for aid from the Celestial Emperor and proposed an alliance against the rising power of the Arabs. During his numerous campaigns in Central Asia, Afghanistan and in Western India, Lalitaditya and his army definitely came across and clashed with the armies of the Arabs and had thus an opportunity of coming in contact with the followers of the new faith.

In India the province of Sind was the first to experience the impact of Islam through Muhammad Bin Qasim's expedition. Bin Qasim defeated the ruler of Sind, Dahir, whose sway extended to the borders of Kashmir. We learn from an original source, the *Chach Nama,* that Bin

Qasim had proceeded from Multan to the frontiers of Kashmir and at the same time sent an expedition to Kanauj. But here he met with little success.

Bin Qasim's rule was thus short-lived and the Arabs left the shores of India without founding a kingdom. Surprise has often been felt why the Arabs stopped merely at the gates of India, and even failed to retain what they had conquered. One of the chief reasons, according to Majumdar, was the check they received in their onward progress at the hands of the imperial forces of Lalitaditya who having conquered Malwa and Gujrat, defeated the Arab forces advancing under the energetic governor Junaid, somewhere near the borders of Kashmir which extended to Western India. He sent an embassy to China for making common cause against the Arabs, but though no help was forthcoming from that quarter, he was able to defeat the Arabs by his own unaided efforts.[1]

Even though driven out of Sind, the Arabs established economic supermacy in the entire Arab belt, which enabled them to survive all internal upheavals including the Shia-Sunni divide and the sack of Baghdad in 1258 AD. But when in 1498 Vasco de Gama, discovered a new route to India, the Arab expansion was on the retreat.

The story of the spread of Islam in India from the north is different. The Arabs never carried the standard of this religion far beyond the Indus, and though the doctrine of the new faith was accepted by many, it had lost its political unity, and the control of its "destinies had passed from the hands of the Arabian successors of Muhammad into those of independent dynasties acknowledging the Caliph at Baghdad merely as a spiritual head."

Mahmud's Invasion

In the early part of the tenth century the descendants of Saman, a Persian chieftain of Balkh who had accepted Islam, extended their dominion over Transoxiana, Persia and the greater part of the present kingdom of Afghanistan, but their great empire waned almost as rapidly as it had waxed and their power gradually passed into the hands of the Turkish slaves to whom they had been wont to entrust the duties of the State. It fell to the lot of one of the successors of these slave kings, Mahmud Ghazni, to prepare the ground for a Muslim kingdom in the northern and subsequently in western India.

Ghazni's several invasions of India are well known to every

1. Majumdar, *The Classical Age*, p. 174.

student of Indian history. Kashmir at that time, internally weakened and being thus an easy and inviting prey to the rising tide of the Islamic forces, reverted under hostile circumstances, to a policy of exclusiveness and thoroughly sealed its frontiers. Says Alberuni:

> "They are particularly anxious about the natural strength of the country and, therefore, take always much care to keep a strong hold upon the entrances and roads leading into it. In consequence, it is very difficult to have any commerce with them. In former times, they used to allow one or two foreigners to enter their country, particularly Jews, but at present do not allow any Hindu whom they do not know personally to enter, much less other people."

It is easy to shut out armies and men, but ideas and cultural ferments have, all along the course of world history, proved too strong for any artificial barriers. The fact that Alberuni without having visited the Valley personally, was capable of giving exact details of its geography, shows that he must have come in contact with a few learned Pandits of Kashmir who "in old days, as at present, were accustomed to leave their homes for distant places, wherever their learning could secure for them a livelihood." He is also responsible for the statement that due to the rapacities of Ghazni most of the learned Brahmins of Northern India fled to Kashmir, which must have enormously influenced the cultural growth of the Valley and also brought in some elementary ideas about Islam and the Prophet.

Kashmir had a special reason to attract the attention of Ghazni and his armies. From ancient times Gandhara or north-western frontier of India, had forged strong political and cultural ties with Kashmir and laterly when Kabul and its dependencies passed into the hands of the Hindu Sahiya dynasty under Lalliya, a Brahmin, who overthrew the last of the Turki Sahiya kings — the offshoots of the Kusans — the rulers of the two kingdoms entered into matrimonial relations among themselves. When the Sahiya kingdom under Jaipala received the first onslaught of Ghazni's forces, he looked for, and received, aid from his friend and kinsman, the then ruler of Kashmir . The last of the Sahiyas, Trilochanpala, though aided by the Kashmir king Samgramaraja (1003-28 AD) was finally defeated by the forces of Ghazni and Kalhana devotes a good number of stanzas in his famous *Rajatarangini* to lament the fall of that great kingdom. Trilochanpala made some more feeble attempts to regain his throne and kingdom but met with no success.

After the final destruction of the Sahiya kingdom and the dispersal

of its great army, the way was opened for a raid into India and Mahmud marched to the fortress of Nagarkot in Kangra which he occupied without much opposition. The independent Hindu kingdom of Kashmir was a thorn in his side and he made up his mind to reduce it during one of his subsequent invasions. In 1015 AD he invaded Kashmir via the Tosa-maidan Pass and invested Lohkot or Loharkot, a strong fortress on the outskirts of the Valley. But thanks to the dogged resistance offered by Kashmiris and the inaccessibility of the mountain paths, he had to retire in ignominy. The great secret of his success against the forces of Sahiyas had been his redoubtable cavalry which, though effective in the plains, could not be deployed advantageously in inaccessible and difficult mountain paths. The siege of the fortress continued for two months, but on seeing that the weather was becoming unfavourable and that the Kashmiris were receiving fresh reinforcements every day, he raised the siege and retired. "This was his first serious reverse in India. His army lost its way in the unfamiliar highlands and its retreat was interrupted by flooded valleys, but at length after much toil it debouched into the open country and returned to Ghazni in disorder."[2]

In 1021 Mahmud, to regain his lost prestige, again invaded Kashmir by the same route. But again the fortress of Lohkot stood in his way. After an unsuccessful siege which lasted a month, snow began to fall and fearing the destruction of his forces as in the previous invasion Mahmud gave up the attempt at its reduction and withdrew. This convinced him of the impregnable strength of the Kashmir kingdom, and he abandoned the idea of invading Kashmir again.[3]

Penetration from the North

It was from another quarter that Kashmir faced the threat of the advancing forces of the new faith. Towards the north, in Central Asia, the Muhammadanised Turks were becoming more aggressive and were seeking new fields for their activities. A small force of these Muslim Turks under their leader, Salara Vismaya, appears to have extended its influence to the outskirts of the Valley during the troubled days of the civil war between Sussala and Bhiksacara (12th century AD) and the latter invited their aid in an attack on Lohara, the seat of Sussala. Earlier, during the reign of Harsa (1038-89), we come across the Turuska (Turkish) captains employed in his army and enjoying

2. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III, p. 18.
3. Nazim, *Mahmud of Ghazni*, pp. 104-105.

his favour. Harsa himself seems to have been influenced by the teachings of Islam which denounced idolatory and his destruction of temples and images evoked resentment in Kalhana who gives him the epithet of "Turuska", that is, Muhammadan. Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller, also refers to the presence of Muslims in Kashmir about 1277 AD. Meanwhile on its outskirts the conversion of Darada tribes on the Indus was making rapid progress.

It can safely be deduced from the above that Islamic influence was making itself felt in Kashmir long before the country had a Muslim king. Islamic missionaries and adventurers came into Kashmir and preached the doctrine among the people who were thoroughly saturated with the tenets of Brahmanism and Buddhism. The preachings of the first missionaries do not seem to have produced any deep impression and it required all the religious fervour and devotion of selfless divines and dervishes like Bulbul Shah to convince the Kashmiri people and convert them to the creed and philosophy of the new religion.

Conditions Favourable to Islam

The propagation of the new creed was greatly facilitated by the internal feuds and strifes among the rulers and the powerful landlords. It is but natural that under such chaotic political conditions the fate of the common man was all but happy. He had to suffer from the rapacities of the agents of the king as well as those of the lords. His land remained uncultivated, he could not safely conduct his business and his very life was crushed out of him. Added to these were the natural calamities that came in quick succession, famines, earthquakes and fires, which further reduced him to an abject position. Any departure, therefore, from his traditional but out-dated social customs and political set-up, which even in a small measure restored his confidence, was welcome to him. The contacts established by the Muslim soldiers and adventurers among the general population, must have resulted in a good number of converts, seeing that Islam offered them a square deal and freedom from the oppressive rites and rituals.

The name associated with the earliest propagation of Islam in Kashmir is that of Bulbul Shah who is said to have visited Kashmir first in the time of Raja Sahadeva. He was a widely travelled Musavi Syed from Turkistan having enjoyed a long stay at Baghdad. He was the disciple of Shah Niamat Ullah Farsi of the Suhrawardi school of Sufis. Being a devout Sufi he cast an enormous influence on the people amongst whom he worked and lived a life of complete self-abnegation.

And it was due to him that Kashmir came under the rule of the first Muslim king — Rinchin.

Rinchin (1320-23 AD)

The life of Rinchin, the Tibetan, is as adventurous as it is interesting. Originally a prince of Ladakh, Rinchin had to flee for safety after a battle with the Baltis who had earlier killed his father. Though he had avenged his father's death by killing a number of Balti chiefs, his position in Ladakh became precarious and together with a number of his followers, he came to Kashmir and was given protection by Ramachandra, the commander-in-chief of the then king, Sahadeva. Meanwhile Ramachandra who appears to have been a hospitable person, had taken under his service and protection another man, Shah Mir, a Muslim adventurer from Swat.

At this time Kashmir witnessed an unprecedented orgy of loot, arson, murder and rape at the hands of an unscrupulous and cruel invader, Dulchu, a Tartar chief from Turkistan, ruled at the time by the descendants of Chaghtay, the son of Ghenghis Khan. Dulchu's army of 60,000 mounted troops consisted of Turks and Mongols. Entering the Valley over the Jhelum valley route, he did not meet any effective opposition, but on the other hand king Sahadeva offered him a large present of money raised by taxing his subjects including Brahmins, in the hope that the invader would turn back. But this had a contrary effect. The rapacious Dulchu's appetite for gold was whetted and he ordered the march on the capital. Sahadeva fled to Kishtwar leaving the affairs of the State in the hands of Ramachandra.

Rinchin and Shah Mir together with their followers came to the aid of the Kashmiris and did their bit in opposing the unscrupulous and cruel invader. But it was all in vain. The towns were heaps of ruins, the land was depopulated, the armies were dispersed, the fortresses taken by storm. Kashmir was a rich land; offering abundant scope for plunder; but what would happen after that? Impoverishing the Valley during a stay of eight months, Dulchu, finding that provisions were scarce, tried to get out by the southern passes, but he could not escape Nature's wrath. Snow overtook him and his whole army together with thousands of male and female prisoners perished. Then the Gaddis from Kishtwar entered the Valley on a raiding expedition but were driven back by Ramchandra who now assumed the title of king.

Rinchin who had gained the goodwill of the people now became more ambitious. Finding that he had no chances against Ramachandra in an open fight he resorted to a mean stratagem. He sent his Tibetan followers, disguised as simple pedlars, into the inner precincts of the palace. When all suspicion had been removed he and his followers with arms concealed under their long robes, entered Ramachandra's quarters and before his guards could come to his help, murdered him in cold blood. Proclaiming himself king he, in order to wipe off all opposition, married Ramachandra's daughter, Kota, and also appointed his son Ravanchandra as his prime minister and later as the governor of the Pargana of Lar. [4]

Having usurped the throne he wanted further to strengthen his position by adopting the religion of his subjects. Calling Shri Devaswami, the religious and spiritual head of the Saivas, he begged him, in all humility to admit him to the Hindu fold.

The Pandits held a solemn conclave, at the end of which they, with one voice, refused him the privilege of calling himself a Hindu. "But why"? asked Rinchin. Simply because the caste of his birth was doubtful, was the answer. Disappointed and disgraced he passed a restless night. Was there no spiritual solace for him? Suddenly, in the early hours of the morning, he was roused from his disturbed sleep by the sharp and loud voice of the Muazin. "There is no God but God and Muhammad is His Prophet." Looking out of the window he observed the devout Bulbul Shah at prayer. He went to his presence. Could he admit him to his creed? Could he satisfy his spiritual hunger? Bulbul Shah comforted him and told him to have faith in God and the Prophet. Rinchin was thus admitted to Islam and became the first Muslim king of Kashmir.

Thus exactly 305 years after Mahmud Ghazni's unsuccessful invasion, Islam attained the status of State religion in Kashmir. But so imperceptible was the change that it

> "did neither affect the independence of the country nor at first materially change its political and cultural condition. The administration remained as before in the hands of the traditional official class, the Brahmins, for whom a change of religion presented no advantage and who accordingly retained their inherited status, together with its literary traditions. Sanskrit remained for a considerable period after the end of Hindu rule the medium of official communication and record in Kashmir as shown by the

4. Dutt, *Kings of Kashmira*, p. 29.

Lokaprakasha. The manifold forms for official documents, reports, etc., which are contained in this remarkable handbook of Kashmirian administrative routine, are drawn up in a curious Sanskrit jargon full of Persian and Arabic words which must have become current in Kashmir soon after the introduction of Islam."[5]

A Strong Administrator

Bearing no rancour towards the Hindus, Rinchin applied his energies to alleviate the sufferings of the people after the terrible invasion of Dulchu. "The country", says Jonaraja, "was weary of trouble and disorder, and Shree Rinchin gave it rest under the shelter of his arm. When the dark days disappeared, the people of Kashmir witnessed again all the festivities which they had beheld under their former kings".[6]

It appears that the Lavanyas, the professional soldiers, were inflicting untold miseries on the people and the previous kings had been unable to suppress them and put them under proper discipline. Rinchin curbed their propensities for loot and murder and also sowed seeds of disunity amongst them, thus weakening them further. The king and the people were left in peace and "like the birds in the sky the king roamed easily in that thorny wood where even the God of love had become bewildered."[7]

Rinchin ruled with a firm but just hand. He dispensed justice impartially. The chronicler mentions the instance of the son of a powerful lord, named Timi, who had forcibly taken milk from a maid and drank it. The milkwoman instantly complained to the king who, in order to set an example of it, ordered his belly to be cut open and lo! the milk flowed out from his stomach. Another story of his wise handling of a case is mentioned. While left to graze in the mountains the mare of a peasant gave birth to a foal, which was nursed by another mare whose foal had died a few days earlier. When the mares were brought to the village, a dispute ensued as to the ownership of the foal. Each claimed it to be the offspring of his mare. The king took the mares and the foal in a boat to the middle of the lake and pushed out the foal into the water. The real mother jumped after him and thus the riddle was resolved.

Rinchin founded a town after his name and built a hospice for Bulbul Shah, his spiritual guide. He endowed the hospice and the free kitchen for the poor with the revenue collections from several villages.

5. Stein, Trans. of *Rajatarangini*, Vol. I, p. 130.
6. Dutt, *Kings of Kashmira*, p. 19.
7. Ibid., p. 19.

The mosque and the hospice were later destroyed by a fire and a smaller mosque was built at the place.

Notwithstanding his great qualities as an administrator, the king was not left in peace. A rebellion was raised by some disgruntled feudal lords headed by Tuka, his former prime minister. Through his courage and presence of mind he succeeded in putting it down, but in the skirmish, he received a severe wound on his head. The wound would not heal and after a few months of painful existence he died of it, having ruled for a brief period of over three years. Before his death he left his son and wife, Kota Rani, to the care of Shah Mir who having remained loyal to him throughout, had risen to the position of chief minister.

After the death of Rinchin, his son, Haider, who was an infant, did not succeed him, but instead Kota Rani and Shah Mir invited Udyanadeva, the brother of Sahadeva, who ruled the country for 15 years. He married Rinchin's widow, who became the *de facto* ruler of Kashmir. "She was, as it were, the mind, and the king, the body who carried out her order."[8]

Udyanadeva (1323-38)

It was during his time that Kashmir suffered form another invader, Achala, a Turkish leader who entered the Valley by the Pir Panjal route laying waste the places he passed through. Like his brother, Udyanadeva too was a weakling and at the first sign of the approaching invader he fled to Ladakh. Queen Kota with very little provisions left for her troops and being at the head of a house divided against itself, realised that she had absolutely no chance of making a successful resistance to the ferocious and greedy troops of Achala. Feigning submission she sent word to him that as the throne of Kashmir had fallen vacant due to the king's flight she and her ministers would be only too glad to instal him on the throne provided he sent his and his ally's troops back. Achala, blinded by avarice, believed her word and keeping only a detachment with him in Kashmir sent the rest of his troops back home. Then Kota broke her word, attacked and destroyed the detachment and capturing Achala had him publicly beheaded. Udyanadeva finding that he had nobody to be afraid of, returned; but to all intents and purposes the kingdom was ruled by the versatile queen.

During Achala's invasion, Shah Mir played a hero's part. He did

8. Ibid., p. 24.

his best to organise the slender forces of the kingdom and came to the succour of the people at a time of national emergency. He and his Kashmiri followers inflicted crushing blows on the invader. For this and his other acts of charity, grace and good organisation he became the idol of the people. This invited the king's jealousy. But Shah Mir received tacit support from queen Kota due to his being the guardian of her son, Haider. Reduced to the position of a puppet, the king spent his last days in prayer and passed away quietly on Shivaratri night in the year 1338 AD.

Kota Rani (1338-39)

The death of the king was the signal for a struggle for power between the queen and Shah Mir. Kota Rani fearing the latter's popularity kept the fact of the king's demise a secret for four days, hoping to gain time to entrench herself. For some time things moved on calmly, but the queen wanting to have Shah Mir superseded showed favour to Bhiksana Bhatta, the guardian of her second son. Shah Mir cleverly managed a stratagem and getting hold of him unawares murdered him in cold blood. This enraged the queen and in order to avenge him she ordered her forces to besiege Shah Mir's house. The clever Mir so manoeuvred his forces that the tables were turned on queen Kota herself and she was in turn besieged in her own palace. Her forces were dispersed and she fell a prisoner into his hands. Shah Mir forced her to marry him but while entering his bedchamber she committed suicide. Thus ended the life of one of the most romantic figures in the history of Kashmir.

Sultan Shams-ud-Din (1339-42)

Shah Mir who now ascended the throne under the name of Sultan Shams-ud-din, is the founder of the Sultan dynasty whose kings ruled Kashmir for 222 years. This period is important in the long annals of Kashmir in as much as Islam was firmly planted on its soil and the country and its people acquired an ascendency in art and literature during the reign of one of the most illustrious soverigns of this dynasty — Zain-ul-abidin. This period acquires importance also on account of the rise of the popular Kashmiri language through which great saints and poets like Lalleswari and Nund Rishi expounded their philosophy. The introduction of the Shia religion by Mir Shams-ud-din Iraqi is also important. The official routine of the government was carried on in

the Sanskrit language for at least one century after the accession of Shah Mir to the throne till under Zain-ul-abidin it was changed to Persian. The Persian and Arabic artistic and cultural influences penetrated into Kashmir during this period resulting in a synthesis of Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu cultures.

Sultan Shams-ud-din conducted the affairs of the State in a wise and statesman-like manner. The Kingdom had been torn by the ravages of Dulchu and Achala and the first need of the people was complete peace. Shah Mir saw to it that the people enjoyed this blessing and the Chronicler mentions that the king "assuaged the troubles of Kashmir and changed its condition."[9]

The later Hindu kings had been atrocious tyrants, whose avowed policy had been to leave to their subjects nothing beyond a bare subsistence. He ruled on more liberal principles, abolished the arbitrary taxes and the cruel methods of extorting them, and fixed the State's share of produce at one-sixth.

Kishtwar which may rightly be called a side-valley of Kashmir had been the source of trouble for him. The Lon or Lavanya tribe, the turbulent military caste, still following the Hindu religion raised a rebellion against Shah Mir. It has already been noted that these Lavanyas were the adherents of queen Kota. Shah Mir sent a strong force against them and though pressed hard was able to suppress them completely.

During his short reign of three years Shah Mir endeared himself to the people. He had already spent the major portion of his life amongst the Kashmiris and throughout had shared their joys and sorrows. His death naturally caused a great deal of grief amongst his subjects.

Shah Mir had four sons, Jamshid, Ali Sher, Shirsamaq and Hindal. The eldest succeeded him but reigned for no more than a year being dethroned in 1343 AD by his next brother, Ali Sher, who ascended the throne under the title of Alau-ud-din.

Sultan Alau-ud-Din (1343-54)

Alau-ud-din's reign which lasted for 11 years (1343-54 AD) was mainly spent in repairing the ravages caused by the heartless invaders, Dulchu and Achala. During the second year of his rule a severe famine occurred in Kashmir and be it said to his credit, he left no stone unturned in alleviating the sufferings of the people. His reign is also outstanding

9. Dutt. op. cit., p. 32.

for his building a huge *serai*, or resting place, for travellers from Central Asia, which shows the close commercial ties with the Central Asian kingdoms of those days. The king also built a small town in the vicinity of Srinagar called Alau-ud-dinpura and a palace therein. The Sultan died in the year 1354 leaving two sons, the eldest of whom succeeded the throne under the name of Sultan Shihab-ud-din.

Sultan Shihab-ud-Din (1354-73)

Shihab-ud-din may rightly be called the Lalitaditya of medieval Kashmir. During his time Kashmir armies marched to distant places in India and Afghanistan flying victorious banners and raising the prestige of their arms. It goes to the credit of Shihab-ud-din that he was as good an administrator as he was an accomplished general.

From a cursory glance at the history of this period it is clear that even though Kashmir had been subjected to untold tyrannies and repressions by the invasions of Dulchu and Achala, they had not lost their martial traditions. The spirit of the fighting clans of Damaras and Lavanyas still stood high. An able and efficient leader he had no difficulty in mustering these warlike elements around him. Shihab-ud-din supplied this focal point admirably well.

His personal character was without a blemish. He did not fritter away his energies in wine and women. He dressed simply and was of active habits. His greatest pleasure lay in conducting his victorius armies to distant lands. It appears that his army was mainly composed of the warlike tribes of Damaras (Dars), Lavanyas (Lon) and hill tribes from Poonch, Rajauri, Kishtwar and Muzaffarabad.

At the beginning of his reign he led an army to the borders of Sind and defeated the Jam on the banks or the Indus. Returning from there he led his armies into Afghanistan and gained a victory over the Afghans at Peshawar. Thence he marched without much opposition to the borders of Hindukush. He had an idea of subduing the kingdoms of Central Asia but changing his mind he instead went to Ladakh and Balistan which he subjugated. His commander, Chandra Damara, reduced Kishtwar and Jammu. During one of his expeditions to the Punjab he established a cantonment on the banks of the Sutlej where he met in 1361 the Raja of Nagarkot (Kangra) who was also returning from a raid on the dominions of Feroz Tughlaq. The Raja shared his spoils with Shihab-ud-din, expecting to receive his support and aid in his further depredations in the Punjab. But he was disappointed in his

expectations. Shihab-ud-din in all his conquering expeditions treated the vanquished people and their chieftains with profound generosity.

Kashmiri historians have recorded Shiab-ud-din's invasion of Firoz Tughlaq's dominions with 50,000 horse and 50,000 foot soldiers. An indecisive battle between the forces of the Sultans of Delhi and Kashmir is said to have been fought on the banks of the Sutlej. A treaty followed according to which Shihab-ud-din was given a free hand in all the territories from Sirhind to Kashmir. A matrimonial alliance was also concluded with Firoz's two daughters being wedded to Shihab-ud-din and his brother, Qutb-ud-din, while Shihab-ud-din's daughter was married to Firoz Tughlaq. This seems to have been Shihab-ud-din's last campaign. Thenceforth the devoted his attention to the consolidation of his kingdom.

Although Kashmir had been under Muslim kings now for over 30 years, it appears that there was no religious intolerance exhibited on the part of the people or of the kings. Most of Shihab-ud-din's army commanders, ministers and other high officials were Hindus. According to the Chronicler Jonaraja, the commanders under the Sultan were Chandra Damara, Laula Damara and Shura, besides Sayyid Hassan and Abdal Raina. He put his confidence in his two Hindu ministers, Kota Bhatta and Udyasri. The former was a descendant of Lalitaditya's minister and received many favours from the Sultan.

The Sultan was a great builder too. With the wealth which he acquired as a result of numerous expeditions to India and Ladakh, he constructed a splendid town named after him as Shihab-ud-dinpura (present Shadipur). During his reign a devastating flood destroyed the greater portion of the city of Srinagar. All the bridges were washed away and the king, in order to prevent such a calamities befalling his capital, built a beautiful town near the foot of the Hari Parbat hill and named it after his queen Laksmi. For his soldiers he constructed regular barracks there.

During his old age he fell into the snares of Lasa the daughter of his queen Laksmi's sister. This naturally led to great jealousy between the aunt and the niece and the matters came to a head when Lasa, in order to run the queen down, asked the king to banish his two sons, Hassan Khan and Ali Khan. The old queen was thus humbled and though Shihab-ud-din repented later and sent word to them to return to their home, it was already too late, the king dying meanwhile. His younger brother, Hindal, seized the opportunity and ascended the throne under

the name of Qutb-ud-din.

Shihab-ud-din's reign lasting for 19 years may be called one of the glorious periods in the history of the Sultans of Kashmir. He was a patron of learning and opened several schools. He was tolerant towards Hindus and Jonaraja records that once when owing to his foreign campaigns he was hard-up for money, one of his ministers, Udyasri suggested the melting of a brass image of the Buddha for coinage. The Sultan abhorently replied: "Past generations have set up images to obtain fame and earn merit, and you propose to demolish them? How great is the enormity of such a deed!"[10]

Shihab-ud-din was loved at home by his subjects and feared abroad. He raised Kashmir and Kashmiris to great eminence and power and established their supremacy in Northern India.

Sultan Qutb-ud-Din (1373-89)

Qutb-ud-din retained most of the ministers and officials of his predecessor and showed his generosity in inviting prince Hassan, his brother's son to be his heir-apparent. But soon seeds of discord were sown between them by selfish ministers. Udyasri organised a revolt against the rule of the king and wanted to instal Hassan on the throne. But the conspiracy was soon found out and Udyasri after being captured was executed. The prince fled the country and we hear no more of him in the later narrative of events.

Sultan Qutb-ud-din ruled with a mild hand. He personally attended to the duties of the State and himself led a frugal life. He was a man of culture, a poet and a patron of learning. During his reign Sayyid Ali Hamadani paid his second visit to the country in 1879 and initiated the king into the deeper mysteries of Sufism. Sayyid Ali gave him a cap which the Sultan always wore under his crown. This cap was jealously guarded by the later Sultans too until it was buried along with the body of Fateh Shah in accordance with his will. The king also began to practise austerities and produced some mystic poems under the pen name of Qutb.

The Qutabdinpura quarter of Srinagar still retains his name, having been founded by this sultan. It is situated between the Zaina and the A'li bridges on the left bank of the Vitasta. In the later history of Kashmir it figures prominently as the headquarters of the rebellious sons of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin. It is also famous for being the site of the

10. Dutt, op. cit., p. p. 44.

first Muslim residential college which produced eminent scholars.

At the beginning of his reign there was a rising in the Lohara district of Kashmir situated to the west of the Valley. The district was under a Hindu chieftain and when Qutb-ud-din sent Lolaka Damara, his commander-in-chief, to reduce the fort, the chief sent messages through his Brahmin emissaries to the effect that he was ready to hand over the fort to him. But elated by his first success Lolaka chastised the Brahmin messengers, ultimately killing them. The Lohara chief taking a warning from this and apprehending a worse fate for himself and his Kshatriya followers, decided to fight to the bitter end. Lolaka was killed and his army fled to the interior of Kashmir in great confusion.

Famines were of frequent occurrence during Qutb-ud-din's reign. The severity of the scarcity of foodstuffs was, as always, felt acutely during the months of June and July. During these months the king and his ministers used to perform *Yagnyas* and distribute cooked food amongst the starving population.

The performance of *Yagnyas* and the continuance of the Hindu dress, manners and customs among the converts to Islam, shows the tolerant and humanistic teachings of the first preachers of the new faith in the Valley. The Sultan and his Muslim Subjects used to visit a temple in Alau-ud-dinpura every morning. In contravention of the Muslim law Qutb-ud-din had two wives who were sisters. No wonder these non-orthodox practices did not appeal to Sayyid Ali Hamadani who exhorted the king to divorce one of his queens and remarry the other one according to the tenets of Islam. He also advised him to change the dress. But though he held the saint in great reverence he did not accept all his advice.

In his old age the king felt unhappy because of having no heir to leave his kingdom to. "At last", says Jonaraja, "there came a Yogi named Brahmanath and through his favour the king obtained a son after some time."[11] There were great festivities at his birth and the boy was named Shingara, later known to history as Sultan Sikandar. The queen gave birth to another son who was named Haibat. While the boys were still young Qutb-ud-din died, leaving the queen and the ministers in great grief. Ultimately through the intervention of Rai Magrey, the prime minister, the elder boy Sikandar was crowned the king of Kashmir.

11. Dutt, op. cit., p. 53.

Sultan Sikandar (1389-1413)

Sikandar began his career as king under the guidance and care of his able mother. There were, however, some political outbursts in the country. Rai Magrey, the minister of the late king, enjoyed enormous power and prestige in the country and Sikandar's mother was always in mortal dread of the powerful minister. He had been instrumental in getting Sikandar's brother, Haibat, murdered, apparently to please the king. But when he found that Sikandar was greatly offended and grieved at this treacherous act, he apprehended trouble for himself. Thenceforth his one aim was to establish his own rule in the country. Sikandar cleverly employed this ambitious minister in another direction. The neighbouring territory of Ladakh had already seceaed from Tibet and Sikandar thought it to be the best time to subjugate it. He sent Magrey with a strong force to fulfil this aim. Sikandar was playing a double game. Should Magrey get defeated he would be freed from his ambitious rival and should his arms meet with success he would add a large territory to his kingdom.

Rai Magrey conducted the campaign very efficiently and after a short time considered himself strong enough to declare his independence. This was too much for Sikandar. He mustered a strong army and marched against the rebel. Magrey was captured and put in prison where he ended his life by committing suicide. Sikandar remained for some time in his newly acquired territory and put its administrative machinery on a sound basis.

The acquisition of Ladakh raised his prestige very high and his fame travelled far in Central Asia and Persia. He conducted several campaigns to the neighbouring principalities of Jammu, Rajauri and Poonch and after subjugating Gandhara or north western province of India, married the daughter of the chieftain of that place. This lady was destined to become the mother of Sultan Sikandar's illustrious son, Zain-ul-abidin.

The immediate result of these successes was a heavy influx of Sayyid theologians into Kashmir from Persia from where they were being driven out, due to political reasons, by the persecutions of Timur. Sikandar treated them well and gave them land and Jagirs to settle on. Sayyid Ali Hamadani's son, Sayyid Muhammad Hamadani, entered Kashmir accompanied by 700 Sayyids. By coming in contact with these orthodox Sunnis, the king was fired with religious zeal and he resolved to run the State on purely Islamic law and to propagate the faith by force. In this short-sighted policy he was actively assisted by Malik Suha Bhatt

(Saif-ud-din), a recent convert to Islam, whom he appointed his prime minister. Suha Bhatt accompanied by soldiers used to visit the famous temples and destroy them. Martand, Vijayeswari, Sureswari and other well-known temples of Kashmir were razed to the ground. By his tacit approval of the wicked deeds of his minister, history has held Sikandar responsible for these. Hindus in their thousands were put to the sword and the major portion of the Brahmin population of Kashmir migrated to the South.

Although Sikandar does not seem to have been a well-read man, he patronised literary men. To his court were attracted scholars from all parts of Asia, chiefly from Khorasan, Transoxiana and Mesopotamia. He seems to have been, however, a puritan and prohibited gambling, dancing and playing of musical instruments.

In contrast to his propensities for destruction of old temples, Sikandar built numerous mosques and monasteries of the wooden type of architecture. He founded a town after his name (present Nauhatta near Hari Parbat hill) and built the Jama Masjid there. He also built a mosque at Bijbihara, and the grand hospice in Srinagar known as Khankah Maula. Sikandar abolished the Sati because it was a Hindu custom. He also abolished some taxes and during his early reign revised the land revenue system. Later Mir Ali Hamadani disapproved of these acts of religious persecution and thenceforth Sikandar desisted from such practices. After a reign of 25 years Sikandar breathed his last in 1413 AD. He was buried in the enclosure outside the mausoleum of his wife below the fourth bridge in Srinagar.

Sultan Ali Shah (1413-20)

Sikandar was succeeded by his eldest son, Noor Khan, who ruled under the title of Ali Shah. The renegade Brahmin, Suha Bhatt, retained his office until his death and the persecution of the Hindus was not relaxed. Most of Ali Shah's reign was spent in intrigues and crossintrigues among his ministers, and being weak and fickle-minded, he looked upon these helplessly. Suha Bhatt, however, died shortly before Ali Shah's end, when the king appointed his brother Shahi Khan (later known as Zain-ul-abidin) as his minister. By his tolerant deeds he won the confidence of the Hindus. Shortly after, Ali Shah was seized by a desire to retire from the world and to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. Shahi Khan pleaded with him not to leave his post of duty, but Ali Shah was adamant. He left the country to the care of Shahi Khan but when

he reached Jammu, the Raja of that place, his father-in-law, persuaded him to desist from taking such a step which might ultimately cost him his throne. He offered his help and Ali Shah, changing his mind, returned to the valley at the head of the forces of the Raja of Jammu. Shahi Khan fled the country and took refuge with Jasrath, chief of the turbulent Khokar tribe with whom he had probably established a friendship at Timur's court where both had stayed for a pretty long time.

Ali Shah, not finding himself safe while Shahi Khan was still alive, led an army against the Khokar chief, foolishly exhausting his army by forced marches. When Jasrath learnt of his enemy's condition, he suddenly attacked him in the hills at Thana near the Pir Panjal Pass and overwhelmed his forces. Ali Shah's fate was uncertain. According to one account he escaped but as he was no more heard of, it is more probable that, as stated in some records, he was captured by Jasrath's troops and killed.

Shahi Khan returned victorious to the Valley and ascended the throne in June 1420 AD under the title of Zain-ul-abidin. He was not unmindful of his benefactor, Jasrath, whose later successes in the Punjab were due, in part, to the support received from Kashmir.[12]

12. "The Muslim chronicles refer to constant fight of Jasrath with the ruler of Jammu, and mention that he defeated and killed in battle Raja Bhim of Jammu, who had all along supported the Sultans of Delhi. We are further told that several times Jasrath was defeated and took refuge in the hills — Jonaraja also tells us that Zain-ul-abidin gave shelter to Jasrath when he was hard pressed by the Lord of Delhi."

9

SULTAN ZAIN-UL-ABIDIN

With the accession of Zain-ul-abidin to the throne of Kashmir there opened up an era of glory and prosperity for the people of the kingdom. "Possessed of a broad and tolerant outlook", says Pandit Anand Koul, "and dominated with a desire to benefit mankind, he ruled with such equity and justice and did so much to improve the material prosperity of the people that one cannot fail to admire him. His benevolent rule demands special homage inasmuch as he lived at a period when he had no worthy and enlightened contemporary to emulate. In the world around him he could have found little to help him. He was a potentate encouraged to be tyrannical and selfish by tradition and especially by the example of his father, Sikandar. Zain-ul-abidin was deservedly surnamed Bud Shah or Great King. In spite of six centuries having rolled by since he lived, his name is still remembered with genuine reverence and gratitude. Take the name of Bud Shah before a Kashmiri and at once he will with a happy countenance rhyme it with 'Pad Shah'."[1]

Zain-ul-abidin was the favourite son of his father, and it was because of this that he received a good education at home. Fortunately for him and the people of Kashmir, he got an opportunity to travel abroad and learn new arts and crafts at the court of Timur in Samarqand. How he got the opportunity is an interesting story in itself. In 1398 AD Timur Lang or Tamerlane, after his conquest of Persia and Turkistan, came to India. Sikandar was then the ruler of Kashmir and when Tamerlane reached Attock, Sikandar wrote to him acknowledging him as his liege-lord. Tamerlane was pleased at this and sent him an elephant and other gifts in token of his accepting Sikandar's allegiance. On receipt of these, Sikandar sent several precious articles as presents to Tamerlane and wrote to him praying for the honour of being permitted to come to his audience to pay homage to him. Tamerlane replied that he should

1. *Jammu and Kashmir State*, p. 34.

come to meet him at Attock when he would be returning after the conquest of Hindustan. When Tamerlane was returning to Samarqand after his sanguinary and plundering career in Hindustan, Sikandar started from Srinagar with several rare articles which he wanted to present to him at Attock. But he had not gone farther than Baramula when news was received that Tamerlane had already proceeded from Attock towards Samarquand. Sikandar then returned to Srinagar and sent his second son, Shahi Khan, then a young boy, with the presents to Tamerlane at Samarqand. Shahi Khan carried out his father's mission successfully. Tamerlane bestowed much favour upon Shahi Khan but the latter could not obtain permission to return to Kashmir for seven years. During this long period Shahi Khan took the opportunity of interesting himself in the arts and crafts of Samarqand which, being the capital of the great conqueror, was at the height of its wealth and glory. When Tamerlane died in 1405 while conducting a vast expedition against China over the mountains of Tartary, Shahi Khan returned to Kashmir.

Administrative Reforms

Imbued with high ideals of kingship, Zain-ul-abidin set himself to improving the material prosperity of the country by energetic and sustained efforts. As can well be imagined he found great frustration among the people and the whole administrative machinery broken down due to the ill-advised policy of Sikandar and the subsequent war of succession. The first requisite, therefore, was to bring some order out of the chaotic conditions prevailing in the country. For this purpose he encouraged the old class of official, the Pandits to return to Kashmir giving them every facility and completely guaranteeing them religious and civil liberties.

Jonaraja records that the judges who were till then accustomed to taking bribes from both the plaintiff and the defendant, were severely dealt with and corruption among the public officials was totally rooted out. Similarly crime was ruthlessly put down. All the criminals were apprehended and put behind the bars. Realising that unemployment and poverty resulted in the commission of crime he saw to it that suitable employment was guaranteed to the erstwhile criminals. He also introduced the system of proper registration of important documents to prevent fraudulent transactions in property. He dispensed justice quickly and intelligently. The Sultan provided his subjects with a code of laws and had them all engraved on copper plates and placed in

public markets and halls of justice. He, however, abhorred bloodshed and rarely put to death any offender for a petty crime. It is recorded of him, says Rodgers, that he gave away 400 camel-loads for the repose of the soul of a man whom he had executed because of his guilt of killing his brother. When the Chaks set fire to his magnificent palace of 12 storeys, he drove them back and had their leader flogged to death, but took his son, Husain Chak, into favour. This mildness of temper and lenience in punishment did not, however, encourage any crime in the country. This was due to the complete impartiality of Zain-ul-abidin as a judge. "though the king was kind-hearted", writes Jonaraja, "yet for the sake of his people he would not forgive even his son or minister or a friend if he were guilty."[2] He cites the case of Mir Yahaya who, while drunk, had killed his wife. Although he was a great favourite of the king he was found guilty and executed. Jonaraja also gives an interesting story of how the king dispensed justice intelligently. Once a Brahmin, a resident of Kamraj (the lake district) complained to the king that he could not get back his stolen cow which he had, after four years, found accidentally with a man living in the Maraj district. The king summoned the alleged thief to his presence and asked him to reply to the charge of the Brahmin. The man replied that the cow belonged to him and was with him from its birth. In order to test the veracity of his statement the king threw some green water-nuts before the cow and its calf. The cow ate them with relish while the calf after a few snifs turned away its head from them. This clearly proved that the cow while with the Brahmin was accustomed to eating waternuts, a product of the Wular Lake, whereas the calf which had been brought up in the Maraj district was totally unaccustomed to this sort of food. The cow was restored to her lawful owner and the thief was suitably punished.

Previously, due to continued lawlessness and insecurity of life and property, much of the land was left uncultivated by the farmers. Zain-ul-abidin's first great reform was the revision of the land assessment, reducing it to a fourth of the total produce in some places and to a seventh in others. The cultivators were further protected from the exactions of the revenue officers by a law which prohibited the latter from accepting any gifts.

Military Expeditions

Side by side with the establishment of an ordered and humane

2. *Kings of Kashmira*, p. 80.

government, he reorganised the army which had severely suffered in discipline and equipment during the preceding years. When he ascended the throne the army had both the infantry and cavalry divisions. He so organised it as to leave no possibility of rebellion or rising taking place. Moreover his personal treatment of the officers so charmed them that at his bidding they were ready to march with their men right into the jaws of death. He took great advantage of the recently discovered use of gunpowder and ordered many kinds of cannon to be manufactured in Kashmir. He experimented with new metals and their alloys until he found one which was new and hard. With this a cannon was cast and "at his command", says Srivara, "I composed a few lines in praise of the weapon."

With a formidable army he reconquered the Punjab and western Tibet. In all his campaigns he acted very kindly and generously to both the people and the chiefs of the newly acquired territories. Besides putting down internecine conspiracies and removing such elements as tended to disturb the tranquility of his realm, the Sultan further proceeded to enter into friendly relations with his immediate neighbours as well as the potentates and rulers of distant lands. He sent ambassadors with adequate presents to the kings of Khorasan, Turkistan, Turkey, Egypt and Delhi. The king of Tibet reciprocated with suitable presents.

Development of Arts and Crafts

It is, however, for his encouragement of arts and crafts that Kashmir will, for all times to come, be indebted to Zain-ul-abidin. Mention has been made of his study of these arts in Samarqand. With his accession to the throne he invited competent teachers and craftsmen from there to train his subjects in these arts. Among some of the industries introduced by him may be mentioned carpet, papier mache, silk, and paper-making. Kashmiris with their natural aptitude for things artistic, soon acquired a great mastery in these crafts and began to produce articles in such beautiful designs and varieties that they acquired an unrivalled fame in Asia and Europe. Even a century after Zain-ul-abidin's death, Mirza Haider of Kashgar who brought Kashmir under his virtual rule, was struck by the industrial and artistic productions of Kashmir. Says he in his famous *Tarikh-i-Rashidi:* "In Kashmir one meets with all those arts and crafts which are in most cities uncommon, such as stone-polishing, stone-cutting, bottle-making, window-cutting, gold beating, etc. In the whole Maver-ul-Nahr (the country beyond the river Oxus, that is,

Khorasan) except in Samarqand and Bukhara,these are nowhere to be met with, while in Kashmir they are even abundant. This is all due to Zain-ul-abidin."[3]

"Zain-ul-abidin", writes Pandit Anand Koul, "turned Kashmir into a smiling garden of industry inculcating in the hearts of the people sane conceptions of labour and life and also implanting in their minds the germs of real progress. He introduced correct measures and weights and made artisans and traders take solemn oaths (which in those halcyon days one could not easily break) not to kill their golden goose by cheating and swindling. He thus promoted commercial morality and integrity and industrial righteousness — qualities which constitute the backbone of a people's credit and reputation. It was through these virtues that the Kashmiris successfully carried on their shawl and other trades worth crores of rupees annually with distant corners of the globe at a period when Kashmir was an isolated State and communications with the outside world were very difficult."[4]

Music and Dance

Zain-ul-abidin was a great lover of music and other fine arts. He always made generous allowances to musicians. Hearing of the Sultan's generosity and of his love for music, a good many masters in this art flocked to Kashmir from all directions. One such artist was Mulla Udi of Khorasan. He played on Ud to the great delight of the Sultan and his courtiers. Another master was Mulla Jamal who was a great expert in vocal music. Srivara the author of the *Zaina Rajatarangini* was also an accomplished musician and he used to entertain the king often and the latter would always reward him for his fine performances. The Raja of Gwalior hearing of the Sultan's taste for music sent him all the standard books on Indian music, including the *Sangitachudamani.* Gwalior has been the centre of this art and later was proud of its associations with Tan Sen. It was thus indeed due to Zain-ul-abidin that music in Kashmir reached a high pitch of excellence.

The Sultan also reintroduced the art of drama and dancing which had suffered due to the puritanism of Sikandar. Many actors and dancers, both men and women, came to Kashmir at his invitation and the king would hold special festivals for their performances.

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3. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi,* Elias and Ross, p. 434.
4. *Jammu and Kashmir State,* p. 37.

Festivals and fairs were held at different places in the Valley, for example at Pampore, Bijbihara, Anantnag, Baramula, Magam, etc., and the king would grace these occasions with his presence. Fireworks and illuminations were also attractions of these fairs.

Public Works

Sultan Zain-ul-abidin was a great builder. Remains of his numerous towns, villages, canals and bridges still exist and bear his name. To increase the agricultural production, he constructed several canals noted among which were the Utpalapur, Nandashaila, Bijbihara, Advin, Amburher, Manasbal, Zainagir, and the Shahkul at Bawan. Many of these canals supplied water to the otherwise dry *Karewa* lands. During the past 70 years many of them have been repaired and reconstructed and put to use. "The long and peaceful reign of Zain-ul-abidin", says Stein, "was productive of important irrigation works. Jonaraja's and Srivara's chronicles give a considerable list of canals constructed under the Sultan." Jonaraja mentions that one of his engineers, Damara Kach, paved a road with stones and thus made it fit for use even during the rainy season. Similarly he built the first wooden bridge in Kashmir still known by the name of Zainakadal (Zain-ul-abidin's bridge).

Medieval Wooden Architecture

The Sultan introduced and encouraged wooden architecture and built numerous beautiful and artistic buildings throughout the length and breadth of Kashmir. Mirza Haider mentions in his *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* that the palace *Rajdan* was a unique building in the East. It was 12 storeys high and contained numerous rooms, halls, verandahs and staircases. It was decorated with exquisite carvings and frescoe paintings. He had constructed another palatial building, the *Zain Dab* in Zainagiri which the Chaks burned down. In all villages and towns he built rest houses for himself and travellers so that his subjects might not be put to trouble during his frequent visits thereto.

Lawrence says that Zain-ul-abidin planted gardens wherever he went, four of his well-known gardens being Baghi Zainagiri, Baghi Zaina Dab, Baghi Zainapur and Baghi Zainakut. It is, however, difficult to trace them now. The lay-out and design of these gardens seems to have been of the purely Kashmiri type improved upon by the influence from Samarqand and Bukhara.

Encouragement of Learning

No account of Zain-ul-abidin's reign can be complete without the mention of the great physician, Shri Bhatt, who cured the king of a dangerous disease. When on his recovery the king wanted to make a valuable gift to the Pandit, the latter refused to take it. "The only gift I will receive," said he to the king is "the removal of all restrictions on the Pandits imposed by Sikandar including the poll tax (Zajia)." The king while eulogising Shri Bhatt on his concern for the welfare of the members of his community readily granted him the request.

Henceforth the Pandits performed their religious functions without let or hindrance and most of them who had left the Valley at the religious persecution of Sikandar returned to their homeland.

Zain-ul-abidin's love for letters is well known in Kashmir. He realised that learning, for which Kashmir was noted from the earliest times, needed to be encouraged so that the land of Sarada might again shine forth as the fountain of knowledge and learning. For this purpose he established numerous schools, colleges and a residential university. His interest in the intellectual growth and development of his subjects was keen and unflagging and he extended his patronage to scholars in as unstinted a measure as he did to artisans and craftsmen. Hence the great influx into Kashmir of scholars and men of letters from other lands. Many Kashmiri Pandits well-versed in Sanskrit adorned his court. Among these may be mentioned Soma Pandit who held a high post in the Translation Bureau and wrote an account of Zain-ul-abidin's life in his book, *Zaina Charit.*

Bodhi Bhatt, another eminent scholar, translated several Sanskrit works into Persian. Jonaraja and Srivara the famous authors of the later *Rajatarangini* were patronised by the king. Among the Persian and Arabic scholars may be mentioned the names of Maulana Kabir, Mulla Hafiz Baghdadi, Mulla Jamal-ud-din and Qazi Mir Ali.

It is evident that all these literary activities with all their incidental expenses could not have continued and acquired the volume they did unless the king himself were a scholar, "well versed in the literature of his age", and thoroughly conversant with a number of languages. His activities in the domain of literature and scholarship were not confined to translation of books. He spent huge sums in collecting a library which could favourably compare with the one collected by the Samanids. The library remained intact for 100 years after his death when it was

destroyed. As a result of the king's encouragement, education was imparted to high and low. Writes Srivara:

> "Even women, cooks and porters were poets; and the books composed by them exist to this day in every house. If the king be a sea of learning and partial to merit, the people too become so. The meritorious king Zain-ul-abidin for the purpose of earning merit built extensive lodging houses for students and the voices of students studying logic and grammar arose from these houses. The king helped the students by providing teachers, books, houses, food and money and he extended the limits of learning in all branches...Even the families which never dreamt of learning produced men who through the favour of the king, became known for their erudition......There was not a branch of learning of arts or literature or fine arts which were not studied."[5]

Nor did the king neglect other social welfare activities. Under him flourished many celebrated *vaids* and *hakims* who looked after the health of the people. Similarly Karpura Bhatt the famous physician of his time was patronised by the king. Many famous *hakims* from Central Asia and India came to his court and the king opened dispensaries in various parts of the kingdom where free medicines were supplied to the patients.

There were other charitable institutions which the king maintained. Jonaraja records that in various towns food was distributed free to the poor and infirm. At special festivals which were frequently held, feeding of the poor was a regular feature. "The king caused rest houses for travellers to be built at the outskirts of villages and they were supported by the villagers; he caused shelters to be built in the forests."

Religious Toleration

It is, however, for his high sense of toleration that Zain-ul-abidin will always be known in history. Living in an age when religious persecutions were the order of the day, his reign shines out as a bright gem amidst the narrow-minded and short-sighted rulers of his time. He made Kashmir the real paradise in which men of all religions and nationalities mingled together and shared one another's joys and sorrows. In return for his patronage and love the Hindus vied with

5. Srivara, *Jaina Rajatarangini* pp 144-45.
Shri Bhatt who once cured the king of a severe illness became his trusted counsellor.

the Muslims in turning their homeland into a smiling garden of peace and prosperity.

Sikandar's unstatesmanlike policy had left many a deep wound behind. As mentioned, a majority of Hindus had left Kashmir taking with them valuable books both religious and secular. Zain-ul-abidin had already as heir-apparent and prime minister of his brother, made himself popular with the Hindus who looked upon him as their best protector during the dark period of religious bigotry. When, therefore, he ascended the throne, confidence returned to them and as soon as he sent messengers to India inviting them back to their birthplace, they responded with great alacrity and pleasure. He enacted certain laws which vouchsafed to them a just administration and trial of their cases according to their own laws and customs. The odious persecutionary measures instituted by Sikandar and Suha Bhatt, were revoked, and a general toleration of all religions was proclaimed. Many of the temples which had been demolished in the preceding reign were rebuilt and permission was granted to erect new temples. Jonaraja and Srivara mention that the king built two temples near Ishabar and granted rent-free lands to maintain them. The king remitted the poll tax and granted Jagirs to deserving Hindus. He penalised the killing of cows and himself abstained from eating meat during the holy festivals of the Hindus. The king forbade the killing of birds and fish in several *Nagas* (springs) sacred to the Hindus. The *Rajatarangini* gives a detailed account of how the king took part in the annual Nagayatra festival, when he would don the robes of a Hindu mendicant and perform the pilgrimage in company with other pilgrims. On the way he fed thousands of ascetics and Brahmins. To expiate for the wrongs done to the Hindus by his father he built numerous homes for the widows of the Brahmins killed in the preceding reigns.

Zain-ul-abidin was much impressed with the Hindu *Sastras* and got many including the *Mahabharata*, translated into Persian for his close study. Srivara mentions that the king studied these scriptures assiduously and was fond of holding discussions on them.

He installed many learned and experienced Hindus on high posts of trust and honour. Shri Bhatt, Tilakacharya, Shiva Bhatt, Simha Bhatt, Karpura Bhatt, Rupya Bhatt, Bodhi Bhatt and Shri Ramanand were some of the famous intellectuals and administrators who rose tc power under him. The administration was completely run by the Kashmiri Pandits who at his bidding studied Persian, the new court language.

Zain-ul-abidin led a saintly life. He did not take any money from

the State treasury for his personal use, but contented himself with the earnings from a copper mine near Aishmuqam. He had only one wife in contrast to the prevailing custom among Eastern Potentates of having a large seraglio. He abstained from the use of liquors and during Ramzan would not even take meat. In his private life he wore a simple dress: although his regal robes became famous throughout Northern India and Central Asia for their fine and costly material. He was a highly religious man, extending equal respect to all the great religions of the world. He venerated holy saints and faqirs. "The king", says Jonaraja, "took his instructions about religious penances and about pleasures of life both from superior and inferior hermits and gave them ear-pendants, vessels of gold, and clothes."[6]

Flood and Famine

Towards the end of his reign a severe famine occurred in Kashmir. The contemporary historian, Srivara, gives harrowing tales of the sufferings of the people. The immediate cause of the famine was an early fall of snow which completely destroyed the ripe paddy. "A hungry man", records the Chronicler, "distressed with the thought of what he should eat entered a house at night, and discarding gold and other riches, stole rice from a pot.......Feeble, emaciated men in villages longed to obtain rice. A large number of people died. Famine-stricken people ate leaves, roots and even twigs of trees. Formerly one *Khari* of paddy could be had for three hundred *dinaras* but owing to the famine the same *Khari* of paddy could not be obtained even for 1500."[7]

The king exerted every muscle to alleviate the sufferings of the people. He gave out paddy from his and government stores free to the hungry people. Fortunately the following year's crop was a bumper one which quickly relieved the distress of the people. After normal conditions were restored the black marketers and hoarders who had swindled the people by selling foodstuffs at abnormally high rates were brought to book and made to return the excess of the prices charged by them. He also, by a royal decree, cancelled all the debts incurred by needy people in their hour of distress when unscrupulous moneylenders and *baniyas* had taken undue advantage of the sufferings of the people.

Another calamity afflicted the people two years after the famine in

6. Jonaraja, *Dvitiya Rajatarangini* (ed. Peterson), p. 90.
7. Ibid., p. 118-19.

the shape of a devastating flood. Heavy rains fell incessantly for a number of days resulting in the melting of snow on mountain tops. The various tributaries of the Vitasta swelled and washed down numerous trees, houses, cattle and human beings. Particularly destructive was the swollen Visav. The city of Srinagar situated as it was towards a low-lying locality was the worst sufferer. Houses were destroyed and people ran for safety to the hill-tops of Sankaracharya and Hari Parbat. Apprehending similar occurrences in future the king seriously thought of shifting his capital city towards the high land round about the Hari Parbat hill. He thus founded his new city which is to this day known as Naushahar. The new town was laid out on a well-devised plan with broad roads and streets all paved with stones. The houses built therein were of a better type and more cleanly. Formerly the waters of the Dal Lake joined the river through the middle of the old city but the king got a new canal, the Mar, dug which connected the Dal with the Anchar Lake direct. The Mar canal was crossed by artistically built stone bridges some of which were extant till very recent times when the Mar canal was filled up to make a road. The canal was lined with dressed stones and houses of rich officials and traders rose up on its banks.

Fratricidal War Among His Sons

Early in his reign Zain-ul-abidin associated with himself in the government and even designated as his heir, his younger brother Muhammad but the latter predeceased him, and though the king admitted his son Haider Khan to the confidential position which his father had held, the birth of three sons of his own excluded his nephew from succession. But unfortunately these sons proved a great disappointment. It was in his own life that Zain-ul-abidin saw the signs of decay of all that he had assiduously built up. His sons, Adam Khan, Haji Khan and Behram Khan, were of vicious character and though their father tried his best to reconcile them with one another, they continued the internecine warfare resulting in the weakening of the kingdom and distress of the people.

Zain-ul-abidin had sent his eldest son, Adam Khan, to recover Baltistan and Haji Khan, the second son, the fort and district of Loharkot, both of which provinces had revolted. Adam Khan returned first to the capital and flushed with his victory wanted to measure his strength with his brother and father. A similar feeling took hold of Haji Khan and he arrayed his forces opposite that of his brother and father. But

he was defeated and fled to Bhimber. Zain-ul-abidin appointed Adam Khan, to administer the Kamaraj district but his treatment towards the people was abominable. In bold contrast to the just and efficient administration of his father, he "plundered the people of their riches by threat, craft or by deceiving them with false hopes and in some places by force. His servants oppressed timid women and cruelly treated the villagers and took care to avoid courts of justice."[8] He was a profligate taking special pleasure in drinking in public.

Seeing these depredations of his son, Zain-ul-abidin was much distressed and sent a rebuke to him. This incensed him and he raised the banner of revolt and established his forces in Sopore which he captured. Zain-ul-abidin went to meet him and at the same time called his second son, Haji Khan, from exile. Adam Khan on hearing of his brother's arrival at Baramula, fled towards Gilgit and Zain-ul-abidin returned to Srinagar with his son, Haji Khan, when the latter atoned by faithful service for past disobedience and was rewarded by being designated heir to the throne.

As the old king became more sickly the internecine warfare among them took an acuter form and towards the end of his life major skirmishes were of frequent occurrence. Futile were his exhortations to unity, vain his fables of the bundle of arrows and of the snake with many heads, which he related to his sons. Ultimately Adam Khan who was hated by the people was given a crushing defeat and he had to flee, leaving the country and the throne safe for Haji Khan on Zain-ul-abidin's death in 1470 AD.

Long was his death lamented and even up to this day the people take his name with reverence and gratitude as a word of good omen. No tribute can repay the debt Kashmir owes to him for ever. The Poet chronicled the year of his demise in this feelingly rendered Persian stanza:

Sultan Zain-ul-abidin khima dar khulde-barin
Be nur shud taj o nagin be nur shud arzo sama
Az bahri tarikhash 'ayan be sar shudah ander jahan
'Adlo karam, 'ilm o' alam jah o hasham sulh o safa.

Sultan Zain-ul-abidin went to dwell in heaven
The crown and the seal became lustreless, the earth and the sky became gloomy;

8. Ibid., p. 126.

From that date evidently headless became in the world;
Justice and generosity; learning and power; glory and pomp;
peace and tolerance.

With the death of Zain-ul-abidin the power of the royal line founded by Shah Mir began to vane, though it took some more time before the rule of this dynasty came to a virtual close. The later kings of this line were mere puppets in the hands of rival but powerful clans headed by various chiefs. Their fortunes closely followed the latters' rise to, or fall from power.

10

CIVIL WAR AND POLITICAL UNREST

The smouldering embers of rivalry among the three sons of Zain-ul-abidin burst into a fire on the approaching death of their father. As already mentioned Zain-ul-abidin's closing years were embittered by the behaviour of his sons towards him and towards one another. He had tried his best to forge bonds of unity among them, but he did not meet with success.

To ensure the continuation of his lineage and a peaceful succession to the throne, he first nominated Haji, his second son, as his heir-apparent and when this led to trouble, he revoked his decision, nominating Adam, the eldest, in his place. But Adam's treatment of the people as governor of Kamraj and his degenerated moral character, made him change his decision again. He then bestowed favours on his youngest son, Behram, whom he wanted to declare his successor. But the latter had come under the influence of Haji, whose company he would not give up even for the honours that the king wished to confer on him. Exasperated, the old Sultan left the decision of succession to the strength of arms of his sons after his death.

But the wicked brothers did not wait for him to die peacefully. While the noble Sultan, frustrated and grief-stricken, lay on his death-bed, — his trusted councillors and beloved wife[1] having predeceased him — Behram advised Haji to proceed to the palace, imprison the ministers hostile to his cause and seize the horses and the treasure. But Haji desisted from embarking on such a course. Adam on his

1. Her name according to Srivara was Vodha Khatona (Chief Queen), but later historians call Taj Khatun. She was the daughter of Sayyid Muhammad Baihaqi and gave birth to two daughters. She had no son and the Sultan married a second wife, the daughter of the ruler of Jammu. She was the mother of his four sons, Adam, Haji, Jasrat and Behram. Jasrat probably died in young age, as we find no mention of his name later.

part moved with his followers to the capital, passing the night on its outskirts. Meanwhile Hassan Kache a powerful noble and king's treasurer, took the oath of allegiance to Haji and handed over the treasury to him. This unnerved Adam, and realising that his cause was lost, he fled. Haji's son, Prince Hassan, who was governor of Poonch, came post-haste to the help of his father, whose position was thus strengthened further.

Sultan Haider Shah (1470-72)

And when the great Sultan Zain-ul-abidin breathed his last on Friday the 12th May, 1470, Haji Khan ascended the throne under the name of Haider Shah.

No sooner had, however, the spectacular ceremonies of his coronation ended, than Adam Khan, who was in Jammu, planned an attack on the Valley. He was encouraged in his design by the unpopularity of Haider who gave himself up to the pleasures of wine and women, permitting the affairs of the State to be attended to by unscrupulous ministers and advisers. His chief counsellor was one Purna, a barber, who instigated him to put to death the powerful noble, Hassan Kache, with whose help and influence he had acquired the throne.

Hassan Kache's murder and ruthless persecution of Adam's sympathisers in Kashmir, discouraged the latter to launch an attack on Haider's forces. He repaired to the court of Manik Dev, the ruler of Jammu, his maternal uncle, where he met his end in an encounter between the Jammu forces and the Turks. Haider, when he heard the sad news, lamented loudly and had his body brought from Jammu and interred beside the grave of his mother.

Thoroughly conversant with Hindu and Muslim scriptures and a patron of art and literature, Haider Shah was generous and tolerant by nature. But he was ruthless to his enemies and would never forgive an injury to himself. Through the intrigues and evil counsels of his favourite, Purna, he adopted a policy of persecution of his Hindu subjects, some of whom, on the instigation of Purna himself, were responsible for damaging the Sayyid Khanqah. "He spent most of his time in wine cups and in the society of women and musicians."[2]

This resulted in his neglect of the administration of the kingdom and the territories which were tributary to Kashmir, declared themselves free. With a view to arresting the dwindling power of Kashmir, Haider

2. Hassan, *Kashmir Under the Sultans*, p. 99.

sent his son, Prince Hassan, at the head of an armed force, to bring the rebellious chiefs to their knees. The campaign proved successful and when the prince returned to Kashmir after an absence of six months, he had already reduced to submission the Raja of Rajapuri (Rajauri) who gave him his daughter in marriage. Similarly the chief of Madra and of the Khokhars reacknowledged Kashmir ruler's suzerainty.

But meanwhile the political atmosphere in the capital had turned hostile to the Prince. Behram, taking advantage of the king's failing health and indolent habits, had acquired ascendency at the court. But soon Hassan who had endeared himself to the army, won the support of Ahmad Aswad, a popular and influential noble, who headed the movement for the replacement of the incompetent king by some able and energetic man capable of restoring peace and plenty to the harassed land.

Haider Shah, however, did not live long. During one of his drinking carouses held in his glass-room on the top storey of his palace, he fell down and bled profusely from the nose. Already weakened by gout and other ailments, he immediately lost consciousness, which he was never destined to regain.

Ahmad Aswad approached Behram to proclaim himself the king and appoint Hassan as his heir-apparent. This, he thought, was the best arrangement to secure peace and good government to the land. But Behram did not agree to the nomination of Hassan as the heir-apparent. Thereupon Ahmad, with the consent of other nobles and ministers, proclaimed Hassan as king, and made preparations to attack Behram, who was alarmed and behaving in a cowardly manner fled the city.

Haider Shah died on 13 April 1472 after a reign of one year and ten months and was buried near the grave of his father. Hassan Shah signalled his accession by conferring the title of Malik on Ahmad Aswad and appointing him as his Wazir. His son, Nauroz, was appointed the Lord of Marches and Jehangir Magrey, another powerful noble, was entrusted with the chief command of the army.

Sultan Hassan Shah (1472-84)

Hassan Shah in his youth was a man of pluck and adventure, but on ascending the throne he did not display any outstanding merit for the job and entrusted the care of his kingdom to Malik Ahmad who had already acquired a great influence over him.

Soon after Hassan Shah's accession to the throne, Behram, his

uncle, who had fled to the Punjab, invaded the kingdom at the invitation of some nobles. When he arrived in Kamraj, the Sultan proceeded to Sopore, chief town of the district. He sent his trusted commander, Tazi Bhatt, against the pretender who, being let down by his supporters in the king's camp, received a crushing defeat and fled to Zainagir, a nearby Pargana. He was however, pursued and captured. Hassan Shah had him shackled and blinded and he died a miserable death three years later.

At this time Malik Ahmad was all-powerful at his court. Two nobles, Abhimanyu and Malik Zada who had risen high in the Sultan's favour, were removed and disgraced by the machinations of Malik Ahmad. Abhimanyu had supported the cause of Hassan's father, Haider Shah, during the lifetime of Zain-ul-abidin and hence both Haider and Hassan reposed great trust in him. But becoming ambitious, he plotted to overthrow Malik Ahmad, the Wazir, who countered the intrigue and denounced him before the king. He was blinded and thrown into prison, where he died after two years. Similar was the fate of Malik Zada who along with his friend Purna was thrown into prison. Their illgotten wealth was confiscated by the Sultan.

During the early days of his rule, Hassan Shah endeavoured to revive the practices and edicts of Zain-ul-abidin. He himself was a well-read man and patronised a good number of Sanskrit and Persian scholars. Many Sanskrit books were got translated into Persian and the Sultan acquired a great proficiency in religious and literary books of the Hindus. Says the Chronicler-"The king learnt the six schools of philosophy and the different works of these six schools became one in him."

The Sultan was a great builder too. It was he who rebuilt the Shah Hamadan mosque and the Jama Masjid in Srinagar which originally built by Sikandar, had been destroyed in a fire in 1479 AD. He built a *Khanaqah* or hospice at Didmar in Srinagar, and his nobles, particularly Malik Ahmad built several religious edifices. The Hindus and Buddhists too repaired their temples and *viharas* and built new ones.

But the rot had already gone deep enough. Hassan Shah's good and benevolent nature was offset by his personal shortcomings. An addict to liquor and given to the worst type of debauchery — his court had 1200 Hindustani musicians and an equally large number of concubines — he was perhaps the last of the line of Shah Mir who could be called to have maintained a semblance of kingly power. His reign of 12 years witnessed the struggle for ascendency between the Sayyids and local nobles, the latter commanding the support of the people of Kashmir.

Sayyid Domination

The entry of Sayyids from Central Asia and Persia during the reigns of Qutab-ud-din and Sultan Sikandar dealt a grievous blow to Islam as propagated by the Sufi *dervishes*. It was these Islamic fundamentalists who instigated Sultan Sikandar to demolish Hindu temples and to forcibly convert them to Islam. With the wholesale persecution of Hindus, a large number of them fled the Valley, taking refuge in the Hindu-ruled states in Central, Western and Southern India.

With the accession of Zain-ul-abidin, this policy of Hindu persecution was reversed and most of those who had left the Valley returned to their homeland.

But taking undue advantage of an instable rule after Zain-ul-abidin's death, the Sayyids had laid a solid foundation of Islam in Northern India. A stream of Muslim Sayyids from Central Asia and Persia flowed into the Punjab and Kashmir after Timur's invasion. They settled in colonies and coming as they did from the line of the Prophet, they were treated with great respect by the Muslim kings. By and by they acquired an ascendency over other classes and grew so much in power and influence that in 1414, Khizr Khan a leader of the Sayyids attacked and captured the kingdom of Delhi, thus founding the Sayyid dynasty, whose rule lasted till 1450. The last ruler of this dynasty Sayyid Alau-ud-din being incompetent, abdicated voluntarily in favour of the governor of the Punjab, Bahlol Lodi.

Kashmir during the period following the death of Zain-ul-abidin cam under the political domination of the Sayyids whose ancestors had originally come in large numbers to Kashmir during his father's (Sikandar's) rule and had settled there. Sayyid Nasir and his kith who were direct descendants of the Prophet were greatly respected by Zain-ul-abidin. Nasir was a man of great accomplishments and the king gave his daughter in marriage to him.

The Sayyids were given high positions and were shown great favours, being granted estates to rule over. Contracting marriages in the royal and other noble families, the Sayyids acquired huge fortunes and lived a life of luxury.

But to the common people they proved a source of misery and oppression. Says Srivara: "These foreigners had become rich after coming to this country and had forgotten their previous history, even as men forget previous life on coming out of the womb. They oppressed the people." Gradually the Sayyids accumulated all political power in their

hands and appointed their own men on all important public posts. It seemed then that within a short time the Kashmiris would be relegated to the position of hewers of wood and drawers of water.

But the people could not take it lying down. They found an efficient and energetic leader in the person of Malik Tazi Bhatt.

Tazi Bhatt

Very little is known about his early history except that he came of a very poor family of Kashmir. Born during the early years of Zain-ul-abidin's reign his days of boyhood passed in great penury and he could not afford even to go to school and used to wander about the city in tattered clothes. But what he lacked in education was fully compensated by his active and martial habits. He received instruction in archery and other arts of war from various soldiers of fortune with whom Kashmir abounded then. But with all his interest in these warlike activities he could not make appreciable progress in his material well-being.

His rise to power is ascribed to chance. One day king Zain-ul-abidin had arranged an archery contest and offered a handsome prize as well as a position of rank to the man who would hit the mark from a certain distance. Many were the best archers of the land who attempted to carry away the prize but failed. Ultimately Tazi Bhatt who was one of the spectators witnessing the contest, rose up and begged permission of the king to try his hand. To humiliate his best generals, the king gave assent and amid the jeerings and shoutings of the army, Tazi Bhatt in his miserable clothes but with a confident gait, came into the ring. He raised the bow and apparently in a careless manner let go an arrow and lo! it accurately hit the mark. Great was the jubilation among the people who triumphantly carried him to the presence of the king. The prize was awarded to poor Tazi Bhatt and with it the days of his poverty ended. Hence the Kashmiri proverb:

Greh yeli asi kasun Shahas
Teli ho mali sapdi Tazi Bhatt kan.
Should God will to remove the evil of your stars,
Good luck will fall on you as it did on Tazi Bhatt by his arrow shot.

Tazi Bhatt though in his teens rose rapidly as a military and popular leader. Seeing his abilities and the favours shown to him by the king, Malik Ahmad, the ambitious minister, adopted him as his own son. Tazi Bhatt was assigned to the service of Prince Hassan who later ascended the throne on the death of his father, Haider Shah. Tazi Bhatt served

Prince Hassan faithfully particularly when "he was in the foreign country," leading a campaign to reduce the rebellious chiefs of the hill regions on the outskirts of the Valley.

During Hassan Shah's reign, the Sayyids, under their leader Jamal, became turbulent and the popular resentment against them rose to a high pitch. Tazi Bhatt heading the popular agitation demanded their externment and the confiscation of their estates. Hassan Shah fearing an open revolt acceded to these demands and many of the Sayyids were turned out of the Valley. Some of them went to Delhi where their kinsmen were still in great power. Most of them, however, took shelter under the petty chieftains on the borders of Kashmir.

This act of the king relieved the poor Kashmiris of an irksome domination and the stock of Tazi Bhatt's popularity rose very high. His adopted father at this time arranged a marriage between him and the daughter of Jehangir Magrey, an important noble and the commander of the royal forces. This woman had been previously married to a Sayyid but Jehangir finding that she was ill-treated by her husband got her divorced. This relation greatly strengthened the political position of Tazi Bhatt.

Malik Ahmad, with the help of his adopted son and Jehangir Magrey, set himself to the task of improving the condition of the people who had been oppressed by the haughty Sayyids and their minions. "When the State was rid of these thorns", says the Chronicler, "people were happy under the good administration, and they occupied themselves in marriages and festivities, in building good houses, in dancing and processions and they thought of nothing else."

But unfortunately Kashmiris were not destined to lead a life of peace and plenty for long. Soon the relations between Malik Ahmad and Tazi Bhatt were embittered through the machinations of Tazi's step-brother, Nauroz, Malik Ahmad's son. Nauroz unable to brook the prosperity of Tazi, privately accused him before his father. Records Srivara:

"He told him that among all the ministers, Tazi had monopolised the power to confer favours or award punishments to men; that he was haughty on account of the support he received from the people. When his son said these things, Malik Ahmad regarded him with jealousy and was angry with him, though he had been adopted as his son."

But it was not easy even for the chief minister to dislodge Tazi Bhatt. Malik Ahmad had, therefore, to take recourse to a stratagem by which he hoped to get rid of him.

Expedition Against Tatar Khan

At about this time Tatar Khan, Bahlol Lodi's governor had established his oligarchy over the people of Northern Punjab, with Sialkot as his headquarters. The Dogras were galling under his yoke and were on the lookout for an opportunity to destroy his power. They had heard with delight the news of the discomfiture and the externment of the Sayyids by the Kashmiris under the leadership of Tazi Bhatt. Repeatedly they applied to the Kashmiris for aid against the forces of their oppressor, Tatar Khan Lodi.

Malik Ahmad in the open court volunteered to lead an expedition in support of their Jammu neighbours and asked the king to allow him to equip an army for this purpose. This was only a ruse, for he well knew that Tazi Bhatt who was eager to undertake some bold adventure, would necessarily take upon himself this risky job. Malik Ahmad's calculations proved correct, for no sooner had he requested the king to allow him to lead the expedition than Tazi volunteered to march out at the head of the army. The king hearing this request and on the advice of Malik Ahmad furnished Tazi Bhatt with an army and sent him out of Kashmir. Tazi's servants followed him with "great din and noise, in fear and in gladness, even as black bees follow their chief."

Malik Ahmad breathed a sigh of relief, for he was certain that Tazi and his army would be utterly defeated and destroyed. But Fate decreed otherwise. Tazi was hailed as a deliverer and a friend by people of Jammu. "When the king of Rajpuri (modern Rajauri) and the men of Madra country (modern Jammu) saw the costly and well-equipped army, adorned with royal insignia, they wondered. The people of Madra, of small stature, were pleased at the approach of Tazi, they became unruly, left their ruler Tatar Khan and came to him, thus causing a division of Tatar's army."

Tazi Bhatt, though born of poor parents showed his worth as a general and a loyal servant throughout the conduct of this campaign. "He reduced many chiefs to vassalage, and performed many deeds of courage and severity and thereby inspired terror in the celebrated kings of Delhi and other places." With the help of the Jammu army, Tazi marched on Sialkot and plundered it.

Malik Ahmad and his son Nauroz were now smitten with jealousy of and hatred towards Tazi. They had already induced the fickle-minded king to entrust the guardianship of the prince to Nauroz. When Tazi heard of this disregard of the King's obligation towards

him, he felt chagrined, more so, when on his arrival from his victorious campaign the king did not accord him due honours. But he had already captured the people's imagination and his countrymen regarded him as a hero. He was feted and cheered by the populace. The king and his chief minister were now in mortal fear of this people's idol. Rarely did the king sleep in the same room consecutively for two nights for fear of being assassinated.

Sayyids Recalled

Being unable to do any injury to Tazi, Malik Ahmad planned to bring back his mortal enemies, the Sayyids. In this he was actively assisted by the queen who was the daughter of a Sayyid. Malik Ahmad despatched encouraging letters to them. They were quick to seize this opportunity of reimposing their hold on Kashmir. "They collected their party and came in like swans."

Great was the indignation of the people at this unpatriotic and foolish step taken by the king on the advice of the queen and the Malik. Firoz Damara, a leading public figure appealed to the Malik to desist from this. In vain did he recount before him the evil consequences of this foolish act of his. In vain did he point out that Tazi Bhatt for whose ruin he had resorted to this suicidal plan was actually under his power and was conducting himself like his servant. Malik Ahmad consoled himself with the thought that the Sayyids after having once felt his power would behave in future and would "now become his flatterers."

But in this he was mistaken. As soon as the Sayyids took possession of their former estates, they seized the first opportunity to take revenge upon the people and their leaders. Too late did Malik Ahmad and his son, Nauroz, realise that their jealousy towards Tazi had landed Kashmir in trouble.

The Sayyids now attempted to take their revenge upon Tazi Bhatt. They planned to get him imprisoned and to abduct his wife. Tazi was informed beforehand by his faithful followers of this conspiracy and he went to take shelter in the house of his adopted father, Malik Ahmad, who had by now been reconciled to him. This was quickly misrepresented to the king as an attempt by the Malik and Tazi to form an alliance against him. The king sent his police chief to arrest Tazi. At once the wrath of the people took a violent form. The police party was attacked. The king fearing an open revolt pacified the people by announcing that he was only protecting Tazi against the machinations of the Sayyids and had therefore ordered the police to guard his house. By this clever stratagem the

Sayyids practically shut Tazi Bhatt in his house but he was allowed to draw a sumptuous allowance and pass his days among his family and relations.

Fall of Malik Ahmad

Having put Tazi Bhatt out of their way, the Sayyids now planned to get rid of Malik Ahmad. One day during a drinking bout Ahmad's son, Nauroz, passed some undignified remarks against the king. This was used as a handle to ruin him and his family. Knowing that Jehangir Magrey had since the time of the recall of Sayyids, never forgiven Ahmad and that he was on the lookout for an opportunity to destroy him, the king timed a meeting between him and the Malik in the courtyard of the palace. Facing each other they could not suppress their anger. Jehangir at once challenged his opponent who, drawing his sword, delivered a strong blow which Jehangir narrowly missed. A commotion was raised in the palace and the followers of both the leaders rushed to the scene of the melee. Seizing this opportune moment the people overpowered the police guard at Tazi's house and released him. Mounted on his swift horse and followed by a huge concourse of the disgruntled and oppressed citizens, Tazi reached the palace courtyard in time to turn the scale against Malik Ahmad and his son. The inflamed people set fire to the palace and in a short time the whole locality became an infernal furnace. Malik Ahmad retreated in disgrace. His son was killed and his followers soon deserted him. Immediately the king under the advice of the Sayyids got him imprisoned. All his wealth which he had amassed during the long tenure of his office as prime minister was confiscated. "Ahmad died in prison and the field was now clear for the Sayyids to assert their power in full."

"They became unruly after this triumph, they placed the king under their control and regarded the people of Kashmir scarcely even as grass." The administration fell into unsympathetic and incompetent hands, the only concern of these haughty people was to amass wealth at the cost of the poor peasantry. "Accepting bribes," bemoaned the Chronicler, " was considered by the officers of the State as a virtue, oppressing the subjects was regarded as wisdom and the addiction to wine and women was reckoned as happiness." The people could not, however, tolerate this state of affairs for long. "It was apparent that some revolution was at hand, and this was brought nearer by the insatiating lust for power which the foreigners displayed."[3]

3. Ibid., p. 252.

Invasion of Ladakh

Having completely ruined the economy of the Valley, the Sayyids planned to extend their power to the frontier districts of Ladakh and Baltistan. They sent a strong army under the command of Sayyid Hassan and Jehangir Magrey. The latter advised the Sayyid to launch the attack from two directions — the Burzil and the Zoji passes — in order to create a diversion in the enemy forces. But the hot-headed Sayyid did not listen to this sane advice of the experienced and able Kashmiri general. The result was that after crossing the Zojila the Sayyid's army was surrounded by the Bhauttas "who fell on the rear of the army and destroyed the soldiers." Most of the commanders of the king fell in that war and very few soldiers reached Kashmir to tell their sorrowful tale. Hearing of this discomfiture and defeat of their oppressors, the Kashmiri masses became elated and soon a strong popular resistance force was organised. Jehangir Magrey advised the king to suppress the rising power of the Sayyids in order to win back the loyalty of the people. But the king would not listen. Magrey, however, would not be a party to bad government. "I am going away for the safety of your kingdom as well as of myself. The State is ruined and you ought to save yourself somehow," was his last counsel to the king.

The simmering discontent began to show itself in several small affrays between the Kashmiris and the Sayyids. Suspecting Jehangir Magrey to be a leader of the popular unrest, the Sayyids plotted to get him assassinated, but Jehangir got news of this plot in time and with his troops and near relations went away by "inaccessible roads to Loharkot, a strong fortress on the borders of Poonch."

Popular Revolt Suppressed

From there he established contacts with the disgruntled Kashmiris and awaited developments. The king now became a puppet in the hands of the Sayyids. "He lost all interest in the administration of the Kingdom and remained indifferent to the doings of his servants. His mind was influenced by his wife and the Sayyids, and his own acts became disorderly and reprehensible. Unable to enforce his orders he disliked ability in others and lived only to watch the looks of beloved women. These women were quick in inflicting punishments and bestowed favours on men, and were eager in accepting bribes, and they, not the ministers or the servants, became the intimate friends of the king."[4]

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4. *Srivara*, op. cit., p. 256.

Under such chaotic conditions the plight of the common man can well be imagined than described. The oppressed naturally sought the only remedy open to a brave but downtrodden people. They rose as one against the king and his foreign advisers, choosing the opportune winter months when the movements of the army would be hampered by deep snow and frost. This brought the full might and wrath of the ruling party in play against the insurgents. To crush this revolt "the army headed by the Sayyids scattered itself throughout the length and breadth of the Valley and inflicted untold atrocities on the people. The inhabitants were robbed of their domestic animals and rice and wine and other things; and some of the avaricious servants of the Sayyids killed the people in their own houses. The impotent king was grieved on account of the oppression of the people." While hunting in the forests, he contracted diarrhoea and after a few day's illness passed away in the year 1484 AD.

Sultan Muhammad Shah (i) 1484-86

Hassan Shah while on his deathbed fully realised the dangerous and pitiful straits to which Kashmir had been driven. He, therefore, requested his prime minister and father-in-law, Sayyid Hassan, to install one of the two grandsons of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin on the throne, as they were already well up in the affairs of the State. But the Sayyid disregarding the last wish of the king installed Muhammad Shah, the seven year old son of the king from his own daughter, Hayat Khatun. The affairs of the State were virtually carried on by Sayyid Hassan himself. The Sayyids now consolidated their powerful position in the State to the chagrin and mortification of the Kashmiris.

"Haughty in their conduct and cruel in behaviour, these arrogant men, urged by excessive cupidity, oppressed the people even like the messengers of death."[5] They treated the Kashmiri officials, both civil and military, with disdain, refusing them entrance to the court of the king. Bemoans Srivara: "the captains and officers came to their sovereign, they rolled on the ground like dogs, but could not enter into his presence. The Sayyids themselves were unapproachable and the servants and subjects of the king became alienated from them."

A Popular Uprising

The Kashmiris were not, however, slow in organising their

5. *Srivara*, p. 268.

resources in order to fight the Sayyids. They mustered strong under one banner under the leadership of Saif-ud-din Dar who quickly organised a people's army. To reinforce their strength they requested their friends, the Jammu people, to send them aid. Nor were the latter slow in response. A strong force under the command of Purushuram was despatched to Kashmir to help the popular forces. The spirits of the Kashmiris were very high. Armed men from all parts of the kingdom came to the town to swell the ranks of the insurgents.

> "There was a commotion in the city and all the people became excited and ran about with arms. Soldiers came to these divisions every day from all sides, well-officered, devoted to their chiefs, and protected by shields and they received supplies of arrows with wooden shafts and fine feathers, sharp and well barbed."[6]

The Kashmir nobles, with the help of Purushuram's men organised a plot to murder the Sayyid leaders. One night 300 men, including the Jammu soldiers, secretly entered the fort at Naushahar by bribing the guards, and remained in hiding till next morning. When Sayyid Hassan, the maternal grandfather of the boy-king and virtual rūler of the land, came out to hold court, they fell on him, and killed him and some of his kinsmen on the spot. A servant escaped through a drain and informed Sayyid Hassan's son, Sayyid Muhammad, of the tragedy. The latter immediately attacked the fort and occupied it and seized the treasure which he distributed among troops loyal to him.

The Sayyids perpetrated an equally cruel deed. Behram's son, Yusaf, had been thrown into prison along with his father by Hassan Shah and continued to be in confinement. With the death of Sayyid Hassan, the nobles of Kashmir thought it an opportune moment to put a nominee of their own on the throne in place of Muhammad Shah. And who would be more suitable and convenient than Yusaf? So Idi Raina, one of the nobles, tried to secure his release, but Sayyid Ali Baihaqi, a Sayyid dignitary came to know of the plot and he immediately put Yusaf to death. The unfortunate prince's mother, Sobana Devi, who had not seen him for many years, kept his dead body with her for three days and then had it buried. Near his grave she built a hut where she passed the rest of her days in poverty and prayer.

Though the treasury was in the hands of the Sayyids, yet the morale of the people was so high that "heaps of paddy were brought by the villagers and with it the people of Kashmir paid their expenses of living

6. Ibid., p. 277-78.

for want of money." Very soon the popular army captured the whole Valley leaving only the right side of the city in the hands of the royalists.

Elated at his easy victories, the leader of the popular party, Saif-ud-din Dar sent an invitation to Jehangir Magrey to return to Kashmir from his fort of Lohara.

Magrey's Popular Army

Jehangir who was waiting for a suitable opportunity to assert his power again, quickly returned with his followers and assumed command of the popular army. This struck terror in the Sayyid camp and they attempted to open negotiations with him. They were prepared to reappoint all the former Kashmiri officials and to return them their estates on condition that the insurgents disbanded themselves and sent back their allies, the soldiers from Jammu. But Jehangir was too clever a politician to fall a prey to their soft words. He replied that unless the Sayyids replaced in the treasury the wealth of the State that had been purloined and laid down their arms unconditionally, no negotiations could be opened with them. This finally convinced the Sayyid that the Kashmiris meant business.

They appealed for aid to the Sayyids who were dominant in the Punjab and Delhi. Tatar Khan, who was burning to take revenge on the Kashmiris, at once equipped an army and sent it by the Pir Panjal route. But the invaders got hot reception at the hands of the frontier army under the command of one Habib Raina. Records the Chronicler:

> "Surely the Goddess Kali in the guise of the river-Kalidhar devoured them in anger for the benefit of the virtuous State. And when the people of Kashmir heard of the destruction of invaders, they celebrated the event by music, and the faces of the Sayyids became sad. Among the survivors of the wicked army which had met with this disaster, 2,000 lay dead. The rear of the army of the Kashmirians was such as could be relied upon, and so the Kashmirians felt no fear. They became haughty on obtaining an addition to their strength and with a glad heart determined on battle."

The Kashmiri soldiers in the king's army deserted to the rebels and the Sayyids were, therefore, forced to pay handsomely the mercenaries from Muzaffarabad, Kishtwar, Gilgit, etc. "They showered riches on all sides so that even mechanics and cartmen took up arms and inferior servants of the king rode rare and fine horses from the stables."

The two armies faced each other with the river between them. All

the boat bridges were destroyed and the Kashmir boatmen brought the boats to the left bank, robbing the royal army of the only means of making a surprise raid on the insurgents. For two months the city was kept in constant alarm and commotion. The Kashmiri soldiers on the other hand carried out numerous nibbling raids on the enemy. "They hastily crossed the river from one side to another, killed some enemy, cut off their heads and fixed them on poles." The Sayyids in retaliation burned the houses of leading Kashmiri nobles in the city and mercilessly tortured their kith and kin living therein. "Not a day passed in which two or three heroes were not struck with arrows and carried in dying state from the banks of the river to their own houses. Every day was terrible on account of conflagrations by fire and destruction caused by soldiers and other calamities."

Battle of the City

This state of tension could not, however, last for long. Seizing the initiative the youthful and spirited Saif-ud-din boldly crossed the river at the head of a strong detachment composed mainly of the fierce Dombas, and striking left and right, caused havoc in the city and should have been completely destroyed had the Dombas not given way to the temptation of loot and arson. "They raised their weapons against one another and plundered the principal citizens of their property." Next day the Sayyid army under Haibat Khan rallied again and launched a counter-offensive, delivering strong and massive blows on the disorderly Kashmirian army. Many brave leaders lost their lives in fighting rearguard actions while covering the retreat of their army. Conspicuous for his bravery in this battle was Daud Magrey, the talented and beautiful son of Jehangir. In their attempt to escape to their own camp on the other side of the river, the boat bridge gave way under the stampede when more than 100 Kashmiri soldiers "fell into the river and being heavily weighted by their armour they sank and died in the Vitasta."[7]

Intoxicated by this victory the Sayyids gave themselves up to revelry and to insensate plunder. In their lust for revenge they did not hesitate to murder even the innocent and unarmed citizens. A learned physician, Yavaneswar, respected and honoured by all the Kashmiris was killed in his own house. "They fixed several heads on poles and in order to strike terror into the people they placed them like rows of lamps on a piece of wood on the banks of the Vitasta."

7. *Srivara*, op. cit., p. 289.

"In the meantime the people of Kashmir collected the surviving soldiers from all direction and again raised an army." The commanders then thought out plans to overcome the enemy. Ultimately it was resolved that the army should make crossings at three widely separated points in order to divert the strength of the defending enemy. Consequently one detachment under Saif-ud-din crossed the Jhelum under cover of darkness near Pampore and by making rapid progress surprised the enemy by its sudden appearance in the morning. Another column under Jehangir crossed the river near the Anchar lake and engaged the enemy in the rear. The main assault was launched by Jonaraj with a direct crossing near the middle of the city.

Victory of Popular Forces

The enemy forces led by Hasham Khan, Firoz Khan and Mir Baqira put up a strong resistance. The royal army was thrown into confusion by the death of the general, Mir Baqira. The Kashmiris pressing forward cut the enemy ruthlessly. The enemy soldiers "with all their might could not overcome the Kashmiris who went on plundering and destroying; and even killed those who had taken shelter on trees; and in this way they entered the city."

An order was issued by Jehangir Magrey to pursue the fleeing generals of the enemy. Mir Hassan rather than surrender himself resisted to the last until he was killed fighting on his horse. Similar was the case with Habib Mir, another leading general. Be it said to the credit of the Kashmiri general, Jehangir, that he issued strict orders not to show any disrespect to the dead bodies of these brave generals but to give them a decent burial. Haibat Khan, at whose hands Jehangir's son, Daud, had fallen, was captured while trying to run away, but could not escape the wrath of the soldiers who killed him there and then. The victorious army looted and destroyed the property of the Sayyids and their followers.

> "Then the ministers confiscated all that had belonged to the Sayyids and exiled Ali Khan and others with their families from the State. The ministers of Kashmir were of one mind and Purushuram (the leader of the Jammu contingent) and others received honours and returned to their country. The leading men among the Sayyids had hoped that by bestowing the kingdom on a boy they would enjoy prosperity, and they had accordingly acted in furtherance of their own interests. But now they were destroyed; the Kashmiris obtained by force of arms the posts of ministers which the Sayyids had held so long."

The popular leaders who then assumed the duties of the government held a council in presence of the boy-king and distributed the functions of the State amongst themselves. They applied themselves to the task of repairing the ravages caused by the war. The citizens were given aid in the shape of loans and free gifts of timber, etc., to build their houses anew. The Shah Hamadan Khanqah as well as other temples and mosques were rebuilt at State expense on a grander scale than before. The judiciary and the police were reorganised and the cultivation of crops was encouraged. Great was the jubilation of the people at this glorious victory of theirs.

But Kashmir was not destined to enjoy peace for long. The victory that had been secured with so much bloodshed and misery was frittered away by the ambitious and unscrupulous nobles, who restarted the old game of intrigue and counter-intrigue, with the boy-king, Muhammad Shah, as the storm centre.

Some of the nobles getting jealous of the power wielded by Jehangir Magrey, sent secret messages to Fateh Khan the son of Adam Khan, Zain-ul-abidin's eldest son who, on the death of his father, was brought up by his maternal uncle, the ruler of Jammu. Later Tatar Khan's son gave him protection at his court in Jullundur. When he got the invitation from Kashmir, Fateh left Jullundur and came to Rajauri, where he was joined by some nobles of Kashmir passing their days in exile there.

Fateh Khan was a youth of undaunted valour and perseverence, and bore a good moral character. He was religious, possessed simple habits and was not addicted to wine or gambling. Jehangir Magrey had himself, when living in exile out of fear of the Sayyids, considered Fateh Khan to be the best man to occupy the throne of Kashmir, and had in fact planted the seed of such a desire in Fateh's mind.

But things were different now. Jehangir was all-powerful, with the boy-king Muhammad under his complete control. So when he heard that Fatech was planning an invasion of Kashmir with the tacit consent of his colleagues, he became alarmed and sent him word to desist from taking such an action. Fateh was, however, bent on accomplishing his mission and, in the middle of 1445, entered Kashmir, having won over Masud Nayak, the commander of the Pir Panjal Pass. Reaching Hirapur he was joined by his supporters from the Valley. A fierce battle was fought at Kalampura between his forces and those of Jehangir Magrey in which, through the personal valour shown by Magrey, Fateh Khan was defeated and he managed to escape to the Punjab. His supporters were hunted

down, seized and imprisoned and their property confiscated.

But Fateh Khan was not a man to give in easily. He again organised his forces at Bahramgala and invaded the Valley the following year. The contending forces clashed on the Nagam *Karewa.* While Jehangir was busy with this fight, Zirak Bhatt, a follower of Fateh Khan, bravely dashed down with a few of his soldiers to Srinagar and managed to release from prison the powerful noble, Saif-ud-din Dar. Jehangir became nervous and requested the Raja of Rajauri to intercede for him and bring about peace between him and Fateh Khan. But this peace lasted for only a few months during which Jehangir by clever diplomacy isolated Fateh Khan and won over his supporters. Fateh again fled and reorganising the remnants of his forces, marched on Jammu which he immediately occupied.

from there he again attempted an invasion, but Jehangir defeated Fateh again. He along with Saif-ud-din Dar, had to retire to Rajauri where the Raja gave them shelter.

Again he tried his luck with a stronger force recruited from the hill tribes of Khasas. Jehangir had meantime become very unpopular owing to the acute distress of the people who had to go without salt and other necessities of life, the passes having been blockaded by Fateh Khan's forces. So when Fateh Khan's forces, under the command of Saif-ud-din reached Damodar *Karewa,* seven miles from Srinagar, they met only a feeble resistance from Jehangir Magrey who was wounded; and deserted by even his Sayyid allies, he retired to the city. His army was dispersed and the king, Muhammad Shah, was captured and kept in close confinement in the palace but provided with all comforts. Fateh Khan was proclaimed ruler and ascended the throne under the title of Sultan Fateh Shah.

Sultan Fateh Shah (i) (1486-93)

Fateh Shah signalled his rule with the appointment of his trusted follower, Saif-ud-din Dar, as prime minister. The condition of the State was indeed deplorable. There was complete lawlessness and the Khasa soldiers who had come with him plundered the city, "enjoying at ease for six months what others had saved in their houses with great care."[8]

Fateh Shah tried his best to curb the power of the nobles but was not successful. He became merely a tool in their hands, particularly of

8. *Srivara,* Ibid., p. 335.

Saif-ud-din. Galling under his yoke he sought his destruction with the help of the powerful but intriguing Shams Chak and his three friends Nasrat Raina, Sarhang Raina and Musa Raina.

The Chaks

It was during these troubled days that the Chaks were establishing their position as the successors to the dynasty of Shah Mir by engaging themselves in complicated but intelligent intrigues, political murders and by raising the religious bogey. Originally of Dardic descent, the Chaks had entered Kashmir simultaneously with the rise to power of Shah Mir. It is a strange coincidence that Ramachandra who gave shelter to Rinchin and Shah Mir took also into service a third fugitive from the Karakoram — Lankar Chak. Being of a powerful build and possessing incredible physical strength, Lankar Chak slowly rose to an eminent position under Shah Mir. He brought in a good number of his followers who settled towards the northern district of the Valley. The Chaks being of a warlike and ferocious nature soon gained ascendency over the inhabitants of Kashmir who had been reduced to low straits; and their rise to power was so quick and phenominal that they were already a source of menace to Zain-ul-abidin, who predicted their further victories in the political field of Kashmir. Protected by strongly fortified hill positions in various side-valleys and forests of Handwara district, they carried away precious loot. With the decline of the power of the later Sultans they gained an upper hand at the court and ultimately were successful in usurping the throne and establishing their kingship over Kashmir.

The most powerful personality among them during the period of civil war between Muhammad and Fateh Shah was Shams Chak who is reputed to have possessed a strong physique and unrivalled bravery. Shams Chak, however, gained his powerful position more as a result of unscrupulous intrigues than by merit. Beginning his career under the patronage of the powerful noble, Sayyid Muhammad, he was not slow in changing sides at the latter's fall from power. He continued these tactics during the troublous days of the stampede for ascendency amongst the various powerful clans till finally he joined the services of Saif-ud-din Dar, Fateh Shah's minister. But even here he would not sit quietly. He won over two more powerful nobles, Musa Raina and Sarhang Raina, whom he set up as rivals to his master Saif-ud-din-hoping to advance his ambitions. At about this time he gained considerable power by marrying the daughter of another Chak chief, Hussain, son of Pandu Chak.

With the support of the three Raina nobles, Shams Chak planned the overthrow of Saif-ud-din, and attacked him at a village near Srinagar. In a fierce hand to hand fight Sarhang Raina dealt a mortal blow on Saif-ud-din Dar's head, and was himself killed in return. With the death of Dar, Fateh Shah breathed more freely and rewarded Shams Chak by appointing him as his prime minister.

It was, however, a short-lived peace. Hardly had two years passed when dissensions again broke out among the nobles — this time between Shams Chak and Sayyid Muhammad, supported by Ibrahim Magrey, son of Jehangir Magrey, and Idi Raina. The latter attacked Shams Chak in the vicinity of Bulbul Lankar in Srinagar and defeated him. The nobles then took Muhammad Shah out of confinement and installed him for the second time on the throne of Kashmir.

Sultan Muhammad Shah (ii) (1493-1505)

With his restoration to the throne, Muhammad Shah who had now attained the age of 16, appointed his maternal uncle, Sayyid Muhammad, as his prime minister, and Ibrahim Magrey as the minister of revenue and expenditure.

Besides the Chaks we come across another powerful clan, that of Magreys. The Magreys were raised to a pre-eminent position under the rule of Sultan Shams-ud-din who raised the flower of his officers for the army from this clan. During the reign of Sultan Sikandar, his minister, Rai Magrey also rose to power and under the latter Sultan the Magrey clan played an important and decisive role in shaping the political history of the State. The Magreys were staunch followers of the Sunni doctrine and were thus religiously and politically pitted against the Chaks who had adopted the Shia faith.

Shams-ud-din Iraqi

Apart from the rise of powerful clans and feudal landlords, an event during this period is worthy of notice. This was the appearance in Kashmir in about 1492 AD of a preacher from Talish on the shores of the Caspian, named Shams-ud-din Iraqi who described himself as a disciple of Sayyid Muhammad Noor Baksh of Khorasan and preached a medley of doctrines. He professed to be an orthodox Sunni like most of the inhabitants of the Valley, but the doctrines set forth in his theological work, *Ahwath* or "Most Comprehensive", are described as

"conforming neither to the Sunni nor to the Shia creed." But the preaching of his doctrines ultimately led to the foundation of the Shia sect in Kashmir. And when the Chaks adopted these doctrines wholesale, seeds were sown for outbursts of religious frenzy throughout the rule of the Sultans and after.

According to the unknown author to *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, there was wholesale conversion of Hindus conducted by the Mir in collusion with Musa Raina. Shams-ud-din Iraqi had several devoted followers among the nobles, the principal one being Musa Raina. Sayyid Muhammad who was the de *facto* ruler, did not approve of Shams-ud-din's ideas, and compelled him to retire to Skardu. Musa Raina and the Chaks were greatly incensed at this, and with the help of Ibrahim Magrey raised a rebellion against Muhammad Shah and invited Fateh Shah, who was biding his time at Naushera. Fateh Shah entered the Valley and at Hirapur was joined by the rebellious nobles. In order to crush him, Sayyid Muhammad and the king marched with a strong force to Zainakot, where a sanguinary battle was fought, and Fateh Khan had a reverse. Next day, however, he reorganised his forces and offered battle. Sayyid Muhammad lost his life while fighting bravely and this so demoralised the royal forces that they ran pell-mell, leaving the road to Srinagar open to the victorious army of Fateh Shah. Muhammad Shah narrowly escaped capture and became a fugitive again.

Sultan Fateh Shah (ii) (1505-14)

On his ascension to the throne for the second time, Fateh Shah was not slow in recognising the service of Shams Chak and appointed him as his prime minister. But the intriguing nature of another supporter of Fateh Shah, Musa Raina, could not brook the rising power of Shams Chak. And thus the nine years of Fateh Shah's second tenure of kingship were passed in petty intrigues and internecine warfare resulting in untold miseries for the people.

Musa Raina with the connivance of Fateh Shah who was chaffing under the domineering power of Shams Chak, got the latter arrested and thrown into prison, where he was ultimately murdered. Shams, however, atoned for his misdeeds and intrigues by giving a bold and brave fight to his assassins, and unarmed laid low his opponents before he succumbed to the injuries inflicted on his body.

Musa Raina now succeeded Shams Chak to prime ministership.

His first act in office was to recall Shams-ud-din Iraqi from Skardu to preach the Shia doctrine to the people of the Valley. He openly helped him in his missionary activities. This and the manner in which Shams Chak was murdered, resulted in rousing the anger of the other nobles against him; and even though he conducted the administration of the land efficiently, he could not stand the combined power of rival nobles who, headed by Ibrahim Magrey, forced him to flee. He was, however, attacked on the way and killed.

The office of Wazir was then occupied by Jehangir, but he could remain in power for only 40 days, things being made hot for him by a rival noble, Usman Malik, who now became Wazir. The latter was in turn imprisoned after enjoying power for only two months. Jehangir Magrey returned from exile and Fateh Shah had to reappoint him as his Wazir. After only a year, however, Malik Usman who had been freed from prison, started his intrigue against Jehangir and had his two sons arrested. This unnerved Jehangir who again fled to Poonch. Thereupon Usman became Wazir again, and to appease his rival claimants to power, divided the kingdom into three parts, retaining one for himself and handing over the other two to Shankar Raina and Nasrat Raina.

Conditions in the Valley were deplorable at this time. The people were naturally tired of the political uncertainty. The treasury was empty and the economic ruination of the kingdom was nearly complete. The feudal lords were busy in extorting as much money in cash and kind as they could from their tenants and used all their power to suppress their liberties. They established a semblance of government in their narrow territories of which they were undisputed masters. The only class of people, however, who benefited from the chaotic conditions of the times were the martial tribes from the surrounding hilly regions who came down to loot the unfortunate inhabitants of the Valley.

Pitted against one another the three powerful barons could not remain in peace for long. Meanwhile all the exiled nobles patched up their differences and decided to launch an attack on the Valley and restore Muhammad Shah to the throne. A series of battles followed in which the forces of Fateh Shah, divided amongst the three nobles, and without any coordination among them, were defeated. He had to flee. Usman attempted to escape but was captured and later killed in prison. Shankar and Nasrat meekly submitted and were pardoned.

Muhammad Shah (iii) (1514-15)

Muhammad Shah now became the Sultan for the third time and appointed Ibrahim Magrey as his prime minister. But with the Shia-Sunni differences attaining a sharper pitch there flared up disturbances again. The Chak nobles under Kazi Chak, promising support to Fateh Khan who was related to Chaks from his mother's side, raised a rebellion, and made it easier for him to win a victory over the forces of Muhammad Shah. Without offering any material resistance, the latter again became a fugitive and left for the Punjab. Fateh Shah ascended the throne for the third time.

Fateh Shah (iii) (1515-17)

Fateh Shah's last three years of reign were as usual spent in intrigues and cross-intrigues of the rival factions. He was a mere figure head, the Chak and other nobles assigning him only the revenues of the crown lands, and dividing the rest of the kingdom among themselves.

In the autumn of 1515, Muhammad Shah with the help of Magrey made another bid to capture the throne, but did not meet with any success. After wandering for nearly two years he proceeded to the court of Sultan Sikandar Lodi and sought and obtained aid from him in regaining the throne of Kashmir. With a force of 3,000 men supplied by Lodi, Muhammad Shah set out for Kashmir. But before his arrival in the Valley serious differences had arisen between Fateh Shah and his three nobles. The latter raised a rebellion and forced Fateh Shah to flee to the Punjab where he died in August 1517.

Muhammad Shah on hearing of these developments decided to leave the Lodi supporters behind in the Punjab, and with only 2,000 of his personal followers proceeded towards Srinagar.

Muhammad Shah (iv) (1517-28)

On ascending the throne for the fourth time, Muhammad Shah appointed Kazi Chak as his prime minister. He then returned to the Punjab to thank his Lodi supporters and to send back their troops. Meanwhile, the passes were blocked with snow and he had to spend the winter at Naushera.

During his absence, the Valley was plunged into civil war. A host

of petty nobles engaged themselves in fights among themselves, turning the land into a veritable bedlam.

During this period Kashmir was passing through a medley of political, economic and religious currents and cross-currents. Across the eastern frontiers, in Central Asia, the Mughals were founding a strong kingdom under Abu Said. Another branch of this dynasty was sending its cohorts over the Khybar to lay the firm foundations of an empire. It was not, therefore, surprising that the Valley should become an inviting prey to these conquerors.

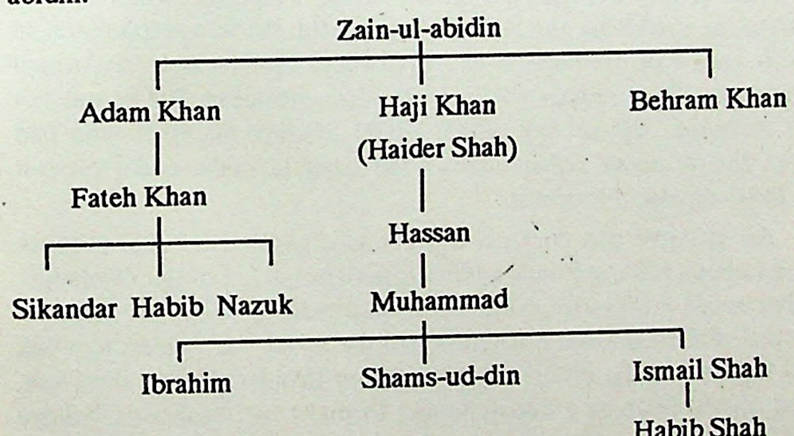
The internecine wars further weakened Kashmir economically. The State depended for some essential commodities on other parts of India and Central Asia, most important of these being salt, textiles and shawl-wool. With a weak government at home the trade routes became vulnerable to attack by unscrupulous hill tribes and bandits, whom the forces of the king could not suppress, ultimately resulting in the complete break-down of the entire economy of Kashmir. Added to this was the rising tide of Shia and Sunni differences which supplied an easy handle to more clever politicians under the Mughals to interfere in the internal affairs of the kingdom. How all these various forces came to a head will become clear with the study of the conflicting and confusing history of the last hundred years of the later Sultans and Chaks.

11

RISE AND FALL OF CHAK DYNASTY

Out of the confusing picture of the currents and cross-currents of the political intrigues at this time, there emerge the personalities of two rival nobles, Malik Abdal the son of Ibrahim Magrey, and Kazi the leader of the Chak clan and hero of many a battle. Besides, there appear on the scene the three sons of Fateh Shah — Sikandar, Habib and Nazuk. Habib died early while fleeing from Kashmir after a defeat at the hands of Kazi Chak. Sikandar was made a tool of by the Magreys and later by Babar, and finally lost his life by torture in prison. Nazuk, however, lived longer to be a puppet in the hands of a Mughal adventurer from Central Asia — Mirza Haider Dughlat — to be ultimately betrayed and forced to flee for his life to the Punjab.

To follow the narrative of the events of this time, it will be convenient to indicate here the relations of the successors of Zain-ul-abidin:



Kazi Chak acquired enough power during these disturbed times to be able to subdue a number of nobles and restore peaceful conditions

in the Valley for some months. But his power aroused resentment among his rivals, particularly Malik Abdal Magrey, who combined together and forced Kazi to leave the Valley and seek shelter at Naushera (1527).

Soon after, however, Kashmir was threatened by an invasion of the Mughals under Kuchak Beg and Ali Beg who were sent by Babar to help Sikandar in securing the throne, but really to bring the Valley under the Mughal hegemony.

Babar had brought Delhi under his sway and was directing all his energies to build an empire. Kashmir occupying an important strategic position could not escape his notice and when he learnt of the internal troubles in the Valley, he thought it to be an opportune moment to fulfil his ambition. The Mughals, inhabitants of a cold country, had an additional incentive to bring the beautiful Valley with its salubrious climate, under their rule: they very much desired to spend the hot Indian summer months there.

Notwithstanding their weakness for intrigue and race for power, the feudal lords of the Valley, however, rallied under the banner of Kazi Chak whose patriotism was stirred. Though he had received no orders from Muhammad Shah, he decided to repel the invasion . He collected a force from the surrounding hill tribes and exiled Kashmiri soldiers, and sent his son, Ghazi, a boy of 18 , to conduct operations against the Mughals. Ghazi and his soldiers gave such a tough fight to the forces of Babar that they had to withdraw ignominiously.

This victory over the powerful Mughal army made Kazi Chak a hero to the Kashmiris and he was all powerful. He was reappointed as Wazir and with the popular support behind him he soon dethroned Muhammad Shah and put his son, Ibrahim, on the throne. But he was not left in peace by his opponents. Abdal Magrey his rival who had taken shelter under Babar induced the latter to make another effort for the conquest of Kashmir.

An efficient and compact army was organised for this purpose from Lahore. Having gained a bitter experience in his earlier campaign, Babar made a diplomatic move. He had realised that with all their internal differences the Kashmiris had the knack of joining together and fighting to the bitter end any foreign invader. Babar, therefore, used Nazuk Shah as a decoy hoping to make the Kashmiris believe that it was another attempt from a scion of Shah Mir to gain the throne of Kashmir. Nazuk Shah was declared the Sultan of Kashmir. The trick succeeded and early in the spring of 1528 the rebel chiefs with Nazuk

Shah and the Mughal army entered Kashmir and defeated the forces led by Kazi Chak. Kazi Chak was pursued out of Kashmir by Abdal Magrey who now became all powerful.

Nazuk Shah remained on the throne for only a year and Muhammad Shah was restored in 1530 for the fifth time.

Abdal Magrey then thought it prudent to send away his Mughal allies and when they left with handsome presents they carried tempting tales of the beauty of Kashmir and the opportunities that the internecine warfare among its nobles offered for Mughal intervention and its ultimate subjugation.

Meanwhile Babar died and Humayun succeeded him to the throne of Delhi. His brother, Kamran, the governor of the Punjab, organised a strong military force and set out towards the Valley. With Naushera as his base, he despatched a force of 3,000 horse under Mehram Beg to undertake the reduction of the Valley. Torn by the feuds among the nobles, Kashmir could offer no effective resistance and the Mughals entered Srinagar without a fight and setting it on fire killed the forces who came down from the hills to oppose them.

But soon the Kashmir nobles patched up their differences, invited Kazi Chak to lead them, and launched a relentless campaign of guerrilla warfare. The Mughals were harassed. After only a month and a half, finding it difficult to maintain their hold on the Valley, they entered into a pact with Kazi Chak according to which they agreed to quit the Valley on promise of a safe passage to the Punjab.

After the withdrawal of the Mughals, Abdal Magrey, who continued to be the Wazir distributed large tracts of the Valley among his near relatives. It resulted in bitter and sanguinary skirmishes throughout the length and breadth of Kashmir. While their followers were engaged in cutting one another's throats, a greater calamity was approaching the Valley in the shape of a Tartar invasion from Central Asia.

Conditions in Central Asia had become very confused after the death of Tamerlane. Factions among the scions of the Khan were legion. Wars were on foot on every side; states were being overrun and cities besieged, while rulers arose or went down, almost from day to day according to their fortune in war or intrigue. The Shia-Sunni conflict there also helped to fan the fire of factious warfare. In a brief period of 75 years the whole empire of Tamerlane was fragmented into small principalities ruled over by petty, narrow-minded chieftains.

In such a confusing period a small kingdom was carved out by

Abu Said round about his capital situated at Kashgar. With his daring exploits he attracted a large number of adventurous soldiers and with their help was successful in consolidating his kingdom and leading expeditions to the neighbouring countries.

Mirza Haider Dughlat

One such adventurer was Mirza Haider Dughlat. Born in 1499-1500 at Tashkent where his father was the governor, he was on the assassination of the latter carried away to Bukhara by his relations. From there he went to Badakshan and thence, after a year, was brought to Kabul. In his early days he was patronised by Babar, his close relative — their mothers being sisters — and under his care he acquired a great proficiency in literature and the science of war. Full of ambition, he left at the age of 15 the protection of Babar while the latter was still in Ferghana and joined the forces of Abu Said in Kashgar. By dint of his hard labour and intelligence he quickly succeeded in winning the confidence of Abu Said. It was at the instance of Mirza Dughlat that his master undertook the ambitious campaign for the reduction of Ladakh and Tibet. For 19 years till the death of Abu Said, Dughlat served his master faithfully.

In July 1532, Abu Said, his son, Sikandar, and Mirza Dughlat led an army to Ladakh and Baltistan which were easily subdued. While in Ladakh, Abu Said old in age, suffered from the effects of marching over high altitudes and in cold regions. Mirza Dughlat advised his master to remain in Ladakh and himself, at the head of a force of 5,000 cavalry and infantry, made a rapid march to the Valley of Kashmir. The Kashmiris engaged in their chronic internecine warfare were taken by surprise and their frontier guards at the head of the Zojila were overpowered. In the course of a few days Dughlat's troops entered Srinagar, devastating with fire and sword the important towns on the way and frightening the inhabitants of Srinagar out of their homes. The city was sacked and looted and the inhabitants were put to great hardship during the ensuing winter months of January to March 1533.

However, facing their enemy boldly the Kashmiris organised their resistance under Kazi Chak and Abdal Magrey, now united against a common foe. A regular guerrilla warfare ensued. Dughlat's forces, hemmed in a small valley, were drawn out of their dugouts into the open where they were given a crushing defeat. Frustrated and mortified, dissensions broke out in their ranks and Mirza Haider considered it prudent to sue for peace. Accordingly negotiations were opened between

the Kashmir nobles and the Mirza and finally an agreement was arrived at. The Mirza and his forces were allowed to depart from the Valley at the end of May, 1533, by the way they had come. Though the Mirza in his *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* gives some face-saving explanations, for example "the *khutba* was read and coins were struck in the name of the Khan (Abu Said) and one of Muhammad Shah's daughters was wedded to Iskandar Sultan", the fact remains that the Kashmiris had at a time of emergency given a good account of themselves and rallying their strength under their leader, had driven the invader out of Kashmir.

But even though the Kashmiris gained a signal victory against an unscrupulous foe, the country had suffered such enormous loss that it was really a great problem for the rulers to bring some relief to the unfortunate Kashmiris. As if this was not enough Nature sent them a greater calamity in the shape of a severe famine. Thousands perished of hunger. But fortunately the next crop was a bumper one and saved the remaining population from total annihilation. The Maliks Kazi Chak and Abdal Magrey faced the situation manfully and made strenuous efforts to import foodstuffs from the neighbouring regions of Jammu, Rajauri and Muzaffarabad. All the gold lying in the king's treasury was used in purchasing and carrying these foodstuffs into the Valley. It was during this brief spell of peace that the King, Muhammad Shah, after a chequered reign of 34 years during which period he faced many changes of fortune, died in Srinagar in the year 1537.

Muhammad Shah was succeeded by his second son, Shams-ud-din who like his father, came under the domination of Kazi Chak. Kazi Chak, a shrewd politician gave his daughter in marriage to Shams-ud-din's brother. After only a year's rule, Shams-ud-din died and was succeeded by his brother Ismail, the son-in-law of Kazi Chak.

Sultan Ismail Shah II (1538-40)

Kazi ruled the kingdom in the name of Ismail. But being flushed with power, his attitude towards other nobles became overbearing. The result was that a regular conspiracy was hatched resulting in Kazi's flight to the Ghakkhar hills. While in exile he received aid from an old ally Sayyid Ibrabim Baihaqi and with his help he returned to power. But conditions in Kashmir had grown worse during his absence. The nobles after driving out Kazi had become powerful and had established their own separate petty principalities, owing allegiance to none. Kazi was unable to bring them under, and he, therefore, followed

the procedure adopted earlier by Fateh Shah and divided the Valley into three equal parts — one part was left under the Sultan, one was given to Sayyid Ibrahim Baihaqi to rule and the third was retained by the Kazi.

The one weakness from which the Chaks suffered was their forcible imposition of Shia doctrines on the people. Kazi was in this respect no better than others. He outdid Musa Raina in the religious persecution of the Hindus and Sunnis. The result was that he and his tribe were hated by a large majority of the Kashmiris. Matters, however, became so hot for Kazi that he was forced to flee from the Valley. There were demonstrations by the people and the Shia localities were sacked. The Chaks retaliated by killing many important leaders of the Sunnis. At last there was an open revolt headed by the Magrey clan, who sought aid from Humayun, the Emperor of Delhi in driving away Kazi.

Mirza Haider's Rule

Khwaja Haji, who acted as their agent with the Mughals, met Mirza Dughlat (who had after the death of Abu Said taken service under Humayun) at Lahore. Humayun was at this time pressed hard by the forces of Sher Shah Suri and had left Delhi. While in Lahore Mirza Dughlat put before him a plan proposing that Humayun at the head of a strong force should enter the Kashmir Valley (which he declared was so weak that it would offer no serious resistance) and establish there a nucleus of his government. But Mirza Dughlat's plan did not appeal to other councellors of Humayun particularly Kamran. When they heard that Sher Shah had advanced up to the Beas, panic seized them and Humayun then agreed with Dughlat's plan. A small force of 400 men was placed under his command and it was hoped that with the help of the Kashmir nobles he would be able to secure the Valley for Humayun. But before he could reach the outskirts of Kashmir, Humayun gave up the idea of proceeding further and instead fled to Persia. Mirza Dughlat was, however, confident of his success in Kashmir and with his small force entered the Valley by way of Tosamaidan Pass. Helped by the Magreys and the people who were tired of Chak domination, he won an easy victory and occupied Srinagar in October, 1540. Placing Nazuk Shah on the throne, he carried on the administration in his name for a period of 11 years.

Sultan Nazuk Shah (1540-1551)

Kashmir thus became a pawn on the chessboard of Mughal politics.

With Magreys and Sayyids aiding the Mirza, Kazi Chak fled to Humayun's opposite number, Sher Shah Suri. But the latter was already too busy in consolidating his hard won territory to attend to Kashmir affairs. Kazi Chak after some time married his niece to Sher Shah and thus easily obtained the aid of a force led by Adil Khan to invade Kashmir. But the Kashmiris could not brook the domination of the Chaks any more and Adil's forces were given a crushing defeat by Dughlat. Later another chief of the Chak family, Rigi, organised a rebellion, but had to flee in defeat and join Kazi. Both of them united their forces and marched against Haider but again sustained a heavy defeat which hastened the death of Kazi who passed away in 1544.

Mirza Haider Dughlat now in his matured years ruled the valley on more liberal lines. But the one mistake that he committed was to appoint only his Mughal followers to high posts in the city as well as in the districts. The Kashmiri nobles were deprived of their Jagirs which were distributed among his Mughal followers. The ousted Kashmiri nobles could not for a long time organise a united resistance against him being weakened by internal feuds. The Mirza actually had a mind to add Kashmir to the dominions of Humayun, but the fortunes of the latter being in the doldrums, the Mirza maintained Nazuk Shah on the throne, not daring to take the open risk of facing a united front which the Kashmiris were wont to raise against a foreign usurper.

During the 11 years of his reign, Mirza Haider gave peace and orderly government to the Kingdom. He opened schools and built several mosques in Srinagar with *hamams,* ensuring warm water to the faithful for ablutions even during cold and frosty days of winter. He introduced new types of windows and doors in public buildings and improved the architectural designs. It was as a result of his direct encouragement that many of the industries originally introduced by Zain-ul-abidin were revived. Kashmiris are indebted to his cook, Nagz Beg, for the revival of shawl manufacture. The people with their inherent aptitude for the manufacture of the artistic -cum-utility goods quickly responded to the encouragement extended to them by the Mirza. The trade with Central Asia and Persia assumed huge proportions and in a very short time the people regained the economic prosperity which they had lost after the death of Zain-ul-abidin. In order to make the highroads to these regions safe for the caravans, he subdued Ladakh, Baltistan, Pakhli and Rajauri. An attempt was made to reduce Kishtwar too, but it did not meet with success. He also meted out justice in an impartial manner.

Affected by the malady of the times, Mirza Haider who at first,

owing to political expediency, had been very liberal towards the Shias, let loose an era of persecution and tyranny against them. Whether he honestly believed his Sunnism to be superior to other creeds, or whether he wanted to gain the sympathies of the Sunni population with whose help he had acquired power, is difficult to say. But one thing is certain; this policy of his cost him his position as well as his life.

The self-respect of the Kashmiris had been greatly wounded by the overbearing attitude of the various Mughal officers of the Mirza. They again forgot for the time being their internal religious-cum-political differences and organised a strong uprising under Hussain Magrey.

Mirza's Unpopularity And Death

The rebels established their headquarters at Khanpur near Rajauri. The Mirza sent his cousin, Qara Bahadur, at the head of an army composed of Mughal and Kashmiri detachments to reduce the fort. The Kashmiri soldiers of Qara defected due to their harbouring a strong resentment against the Mughals. It resulted in the defeat and consequent imprisonment of Qara.

This was a signal for a general uprising all over the outlying hill districts of the kingdom. The Ladakhis killed Dughlat's governor and forced his garrison to flee to the Valley. Similarly the people of Pakhli drove out his governor who was killed along with his troops by the Kashmiris on entering the Valley. Kaka Mir, another commander of Mirza Dughlat, who was sent to Kishtwar met with a similar fate.

All these developments unnerved Dughlat. He rode to Khanpur at the head of a powerful column to punish the insurgents. But he met with further defections from his Kashmiri soldiers. In order to surprise the enemy, he, along with a few trusted followers, made a night attack on the fort of Khanpur. At once there was a tumult in the enemy camp who let go a shower of arrows at the intruders and in the fight that ensued Mirza Dughlat was killed. This led to a widespread rising throughout the Valley and the Mughal garrisons were overpowered and annihilated. Kashmir again reverted to an independent position. Mirza Haider's body was brought to Srinagar where it lies buried in the graveyard of the Sultans of Kashmir.

Mirza Haider was a versatile man, brave and adventurous, and a patron of learning and art. He had at his court several accomplished musicians. Wielding a fluent pen, he wrote several books, the chief being his absorbing *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* which he completed while in Kashmir.

But all his good qualities were offset by his zeal to preserve the Islamic orthodoxy and to ban Shia and Sufi sects. Moreover he never identified himself with the Kashmiris. This naturally made him unpopular with them and weakened his position.

After the death of Mirza Haider the power devolved upon the predominant noble, Idi Raina. Kashmir could not escape the covetous eyes of the rulers of Delhi where now Sher Shah Suri had been succeeded by his son, Saleem Shah. But as before the invader was given a crushing defeat by the Kashmiris who again rallied under a powerful chief, Daulat Chak.

After the defeat of Saleem, Daulat Chak became very popular. Most of the followers deserted Idi Raina which resulted in making Daulat Chak the indisputable master of Kashmir. In 1552 following a rising of some ambitious nobles, he deposed Nazuk and proclaimed Ibrahim Shah as the king. Nazuk finding no supporter of his cause left for the Punjab. Daulat was lenient to other nobles and with their cooperation asserted suzerainty over Ladakh. But the affairs of the Kashmir court did not remain in a stable position for long . Soon a family quarrel started between Daulat Chak and Ghazi Chak. The result was that Daulat Chak who had fallen a prey to communal bigotry was ousted by Ghazi Chak who deposed Ibrahim Shah and installed his brother Ismail Shah on the throne. When, however, the latter died in 1557, he proclaimed Ismail's son, Habib Shah, his own nephew, as the king.

Sultan Habib Shah (1557-61)

In 1559 Qara Bahadur who, after the extirpation of Mirza Dughlat's forces in Kashmir, had gone to Delhi, was instigated by some Chak relatives of Ghazi to invade Kashmir. Wishing to take revenge on the Kashmiris, he led an army of 10,000 horse and infantry. He was opposed by Ghazi Chak and his Kashmiri forces in the Rajauri mountains. To stir up the Kashmiris to their best efforts he promised them a gold *Mohar* for every head of the enemy's soldiers. It is said that 7,000 heads were laid before him and the Ghazi, who was greatly elated at the success, more than fulfilled his promise and paid two *Mohar* for each head.

But time had now come when the Chaks could do away with the farce of maintaining a puppet on the throne. Ghazi Chak now began to work out his plan. He would accuse the king of various misdemeanours and acts of faithlessness. The Sultan who was powerless could not put forth his

defence. At last one day in 1561 AD, Ali Chak, brother of Ghazi Chak, rebuked the Sultan in open court and taking off his crown placed it on the head of his brother, Ghazi Chak. The courtiers hailed Ghazi as the ruler of Kashmir. Habib was removed from the throne and kept a prisoner.

Ghazi Shah The First Chak Ruler

Ghazi Chak (1561-63) who thus had the throne of Kashmir was in the beginning of his career as king a very discreet person. He devoted his attention to the removal of various evils prevalent in the State. He was particularly careful to rehabilitate the finances. Due to various factors, political and natural, the treasury had become empty. He established a semblance of peace and reconquered some of the former territories of the kingdom, notably Skardu, Gilgit, Kishtwar and Pakhli. To these he deputed intelligent and able governors.

Ghazi Chak is known as a ruthless dispenser of justice. A single instance will illustrate this trait in his character. Once a servant of his son, was caught plucking fruit in an orchard. The king ordered his hands to be cut off. This incensed his son who became very sullen. The king asked his uncle Malik Muhammad to admonish him. The boy in a fit of rage attacked his uncle and inflicted mortal blows on him. He ordered his son's arrest and after a short and summary trial sentenced him to death. To put his subjects in awe, he further ordered his remains to be exhibited on the gibbets for seven days.

But the chronic malady of internal strifes could not be uprooted by even such a strong ruler. Soon a rebellion was organised by his kinsmen Nasrat and Yusuf Chak. The king, however, put it down ruthlessly. The then head of Idi Raina's family, Shams Raina, went to Humayun to seek aid from him. But the day he reached Delhi, Humayun died as a result of a fall. Shams Raina thereafter went to and sought aid from Abdul Mali the favourite of Humayun. Mali had incurred the displeasure of Akbar and had been arrested and sent to Lahore. From there he managed to escape and take refuge in the Ghakkar country. Mali who was already planning an invasion was further encouraged by Shams Raina. They both invaded Kashmir but were severely defeated.

Ghazi Chak though a stern ruler, led a life of frugality, and was a poet too. But he was afflicted by the fell disease of leprosy which increased in extent so much that he had to abdicate in favour of his brother, Hussain Chak. He ordered his household effects to be auctioned,

but these fetched so little that he was angered and wanted to re-ascend the throne to exert his authority. He was, however, checkmated by his brother Hussain and died of a broken heart when his son's eyes were put out by the latter.

Hussain Shah (1563-70)

By the time Hussain Shah Chak ascended the throne the bitterness in the relations between the Sunnis and Shias had greatly died out, so much so that Hussain Shah appointed Sayyid Habib, a Sunni jurist from Khwarizm as the Qazi of Srinagar and Preacher at Jama Masjid. He also gave complete religious freedom to Hindus and used to participate in their festivals like Sripanchami. The king was a pious man and devoted three days out of the week to religious discourses. He was very fond of music. Occasionally he went to hunt, more for pleasure than for real game. He reorganised his army and took his officers into close confidence.

He sent his brother Shanker Chak, as governor, to Rajauri. While there Shanker raised an army from the martial tribes of that place, and with this marched against his brother in Srinagar. The king's able and devoted minister, Malik Muhammad Naji, with great pluck and diplomacy was successful in defeating this brother of the king.

Towards the end of Hussain's rule in 1568-69 the Shia-Sunni differences assumed formidable proportions, no doubt helped by the machinations of the Imperial Government at Agra. Yusuf Mandav, Shia, flushed with the power wielded by his co-religionsist, the Chaks, attacked the chief Sunni Moulvi, Qazi Habib. He was arrested and was sentenced to death by the Qazis (Islamic jurists).The order was carried out and Mandav was mercilessly stoned to death in public. This enraged the Shias who clamoured for the punishment of the Qazis who had passed the sentence of death on Mandav. Meanwhile Akbar had sent two envoys, both of Shia faith, to induce Hussain to acknowledge his suzerainty. While in Srinagar Mirza Muqim, the Imperial envoy actively interfered in the Mandav affair and asked the governor, (or district magistrate) of Srinagar, Ali Koka, to hand over the Qazis to the Shias, he latter dragged them through the streets and executed two Qazis, Mulla Firus and Mulla Yusuf Almas.

Meanwhile Hussain Shah who treated Akbar's envoys with great respect, sent them back with presents for the Emperor and also sent his daughter for marriage to Prince Salim. But before they could reach Agra, several Sunni nobles and Maulvis from Kashmir had hurried to the Imperial Court and narrated the sad tale to Akbar. The Emperor

was highly incensed and ordered the arrest and death of Mirza Muqim and sent back Hussain Shah's presents and his Daughter to Srinagar. This rebuke from Akbar grieved Hussain Shah who died shortly after. But even before his death the struggle for the throne had started. Ali Khan his brother headed a rebellion and the king abdicated in his favour.

Ali Shah (1570-78)

Ali Khan ascended the throne under the title of Ali Shah, He was a pious man and without any sense of bigotry. Imbued with the desire to end the senseless rancour among the followers of the two creeds Ali Shah appointed Mubarak Baihaqi, a Sunni, as his prime minister. The latter was essentially a man of peace and was instrumental in getting the pardon for some Sunnis who had been condemned for their rebellious acts. Ali Shah held the great Sunni saint Hamza Mukhdoom in great respect, as also the scholar-diplomat, Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi.

Ali Shah attacked and defeated Bahadur Singh the chief of Kishtwar who sent his daughter in token of his submission for Ali Shah's grandson, Yaqub, to wed. It was because of this relation that Yaqub got refuge at Kishtwar when he was defeated by the imperial forces of the Mughals during the latters' invasion and conquest of Kashmir.

Early in his reign he had to suppress a revolt raised by his son, Yusuf. The youthful prince had treacherously murdered his cousin, Aiba Khan, Ghazi Shah's son, as he too was a claimant, Yusuf, instigated by evil advisers, defied his father. But ultimately they got reconciled to one other.

Meanwhile Akbar was extending his influence over Kashmir. Unwilling to attack the Kashmir forces in their impregnable mountain fastnesses, he resorted to diplomacy. In July 1578 he sent Sadr-ud-din and Maulana Ishaqi to Ali Shah's court. The envoys so pleaded their master's cause and so overawed Ali Shah with the stories of Mughal power that he ordered the *Khutba* to be read in the Emperor's name and sent Hussain Shah's daughter for Salim to wed.

The last and the only attempt by the Shah Miris to regain the throne of Kashmir was made by Haider Khan and Saleem Khan, sons of Nazuk Shah. They were helped by some nobles from Kashmir and receiving promises of help from disgruntled elements, they set out with a force towards the Valley to contest the throne. Lohar Chak and Muhammad Chak arrested Lohar and handed him over to the pretenders and himself

promised them help against the king. Lulled thus to a false sense of security, the pretender's forces were surprised and attacked by Muhammad Chak while they were on the way to Rajauri. Saleem was killed and Haider managed to escape with his life.

In 1576, a severe famine occurred in Kashmir which lasted for three years. The severity of the famine was so terrible that more than half the population of Kashmir was wiped off and many cases of cannibalism are recorded in the annals of the times.

Ultimately in 1579, the king while playing polo in the Id Gah grounds received a fall and the pommel of the saddle pierced his abdomen. But before he sucummbed to this injury he got his son, Yusuf Shah, crowned Sultan of Kashmir.

Yusuf Shah (1579-86)

The life of Yusuf Shah Chak is as romantic as it is tragic. Born in an environment of dynamic events, he strangely enough led a life of veluptuousness. He was an accomplished scholar and a master of music. The natural beauties of Kashmir had so bewitched him that he would spend months in roaming on its beauteous mountains and flowery meadows. He transformed Gulmarg and Sonamarg into holiday resorts. When as a result of the sudden death of his father he was called upon to assume the duties of a king, he found himself incapable of shouldering such a heavy responsibility. Neglecting the duties of the State he enjoyed his life in the company of a large number of musicians and dancing girls.

In his youth he had married a simple but romantic rustic girl Zooni, later known as Habba Khatun. She was a melodious singer and a poetess too. She wielded a great influence over the king and with her powers of sweet and silent persuasion tried to reform him and induce him to attend to his kingly duties. But before this could produce tangible result, the people of Kashmir had lost confidence in their romance loving king, and under Muhammad Baihaqi, the wise and noble prime minister, launched a movement to force Yusuf to abdicate and leave the administration in the hands of his ministers. Yusuf Shah, however, answered their demands by an armed attack, but being unpopular with the people and the army; his efforts proved ineffective and he had to flee out of the Valley and seek shelter at Naushera, beyond the Pir Panjal pass.

For a period of six months Baihaqi assumed the rulership of the

kingdom. He led a very simple and frugal life and in order to win public support, he sold the gem-studded crown and the royal parasol and distributed the money amongst the poor. He carried on the administration wisely and did his best to restore peace and tranquility to the land. Not wishing to found a dynasty of his own, he abdicated in favour of Lohar Chak who ruled for 13 months more.

Meanwhile in January, 1580, Yusuf Shah who had made some abortive attempts to regain his throne, was presented to Akbar at Agra by Raja Man Singh whose help he had sought while in exile at Lahore. The Emperor was highly pleased since he was on the look-out for an opportunity like this. Yusuf Shah formally sought Akbar's aid. A Mughal army under the command of Raja Man Singh was despatched to Kashmir. While on the way to his homeland, Yusuf was smitten with remorse at inviting the forces of Akbar to his aid. He realised that once the imperial troops landed in the Valley, the administration would be seized by the Mughals and he would be a mere puppet in their hands. Telling the Raja that it would be more discreet to hide the fact of the Mughal aid to him, he proposed that he would go ahead alone to sound the feelings of the people in Kashmir. The proposal appealed to the Raja, and Yusuf at the head of a small band of his Kashmiri followers left for the Valley. Before reaching its outskirts he, with the help of his minister, Muhammad Bhatt, was able to enlist a small army of 4,000 from the hill tribes. He crossed the river Jhelum a few miles above Baramula avoiding a clash with the main army of his opponents. Making a rapid march he entered Srinagar triumphantly. Abdal Bhatt the intriguing minister of Lohar Chak was killed and the latter sought safety in flight. And thus after an exile of a year and half Yusuf again established himself on the throne. He hunted down ruthlessly his opponents and those who were captured were killed or mutilated mercilessly.

Meanwhile Man Singh waited in vain at Lahore for the invitation to come from Yusuf to enter Kashmir. When he was convinced of the trick played on him , he naturally harboured a sense of revenge against Yusuf. Soon, however, an opportunity presented itself to make a show-down against the latter, Yusuf Shah neglecting again the affairs of the State made it easy for his opponents to rise against him. There were serious defections among his ministers and nobles. The revolt was led by Haider Chak, but Yusuf's faithful minister, Muhammad Bhatt, suppressed the rebellion. Haider fled and took shelter with imperial interests in Kashmir, bestowed upon him Bhimber and Naushera in Jagir.

Mughal Invasion

Meanwhile Akbar who was laying his claim on Kashmir because it had been conquered by Mirza Haider Dughlat in the name of Humayun, continued to take active interest in the political developments in the kingdom.On his return from Kabul, towards the end of 1581, he sent envoys to Yusuf Shah demanding his personal homage to the Emperor. Yusuf Shah instead sent his younger son, Hainder, with costly gifts to the Imperial court. After a year Akbar sent another summons to Yusuf Shah, through his son Haider and the Kashmiri poet, Sheikh Yaqub Sarif, to present himself at the court. The demand was repeated by envoys sent by Raja Man Singh from Lahore. Yusuf Shah got frightened and this time sent his heir-apparent, prince Yaqub to the Imperial Court. But when he was presented there, Akbar became furious and complained that Yusuf was neglecting his duties as ruler and was deliberately avoiding to come and pay homage to him personally.

And, therefore, when the Emperor left for Kabul in August, 1585 to effect its settlement, he deputed two envoys from Kalanaur to Yusuf Shah, demanding his presence immediately before the Emperor. Again Yusuf Shah vacillated. The political situation worsened when Yaqub who was travelling with the Emperor's camp, escaped and reached Srinagar by a circuitous route. On hearing this the Emperor ordered an immediate invasion of Kashmir.

On December 20, 1585 a strong force of 5,000 horse under the Command of Raja Bhagwan Das, marched against Kashmir from Attock *via* the Jhelum valley route. Prince Yaqub and other nobles implored Yusuf Shah to organise a stiff resistance to the Mughal invaders. The ease-loving king had, however, realised the futility of such a course against the might of the Mughal empire. But his views were not shared by his hot-headed son and the Kashmir nobles in general. And when the Mughal army reached the entrance to the Valley, it met with a stiff resistance at the hands of the Kashmir army. Yaqub with his youthful dash, pluck and organising ability, inflicted such hard blows on the benumbed foe that Bhagwan Das could make no progress and apprehending the annihilation of his forces, he opened negotiations with Yusuf Shah and his son Yaqub.

The Mughals agreed to withdraw their army completely. Yusuf Shah would retain the throne, but the coins would be struck and *Khutba* recited in the name of the Emperor. Bhagwan Das persuaded Yusuf Shah to proceed to Attock with him where, he assured him the Emperor would bestow his kindest regards on him and also would ratify the

treaty. Even though warned by his son against taking such step, Yusuf Shah went to Attock where he was presented to ratify the agreement and ordered Yusuf's imprisonment. This was a violation of the agreement according to which Yusuf Shah, after paying homage to Akbar, was to return to Kashmir. Raja Bhagwan Das considered it a slight to him and with his traditional Rajput chivalry attempted to end his life by suicide. When Akbar reached Lahore, he placed Yusuf under the charge of Todar Mal. After two and a half years, on the intervention of Raja Man Singh, he was released and granted a *mansab* of 500 horse. Man Singh took him along with himself to Bihar, where pining for his beloved wife, Habba Khatun, he died in September, 1592 and was buried at Biswak in the Patna District.

Thus ended the life of one of the most cultured rulers of the Sultanate period. Fond of music, dance and poetry, Yusuf Shah was a tolerant king and abolished all exactions levied by previous rulers on non-Muslims. He did not demand *corvee* from villagers and boatmen. Though not possessed of personal valour, he displayed dash and promptness in suppressing revolts at the time of his accession to the throne. The manner in which he recovered his throne after his first banishment, shows his skill in military strategy and diplomacy. He, however, realised early that with the rise of an imperialist power at the centre, Kashmir, in spite of its natural defences, could not hold for long its independent status, and all his attempts were devoted to avoiding bloodshed and chaos that would follow the adoption of an unrealistic attitude to an inevitable fate. But he could not convince, and convert to this view, his nobles and subjects and hence his tragic end.

End of the Sultanate

It, however, took some more time and sufferings for the people to realise the fact which Yusuf Shah had already done. Yaqub Shah, on the withdrawal of the Mughal forces declared himself free of the obligations flowing from the agreement and struck coins in his name. He appointed Muhammad Bhatt, his father's minister, as his chief adviser. But things were again made hot for Yaqub. Given to fits of alternate rage and quietude, he neglected the duties of the State. A ruthless policy of terror was let loose against the Sunnis. A saintly and pious person, Qazi Musa, was done to death on his refusal to mention the name of Ali in all public prayers. The Sunnis though suppressed for some time rose in revolt under the leadership of an eminent theologian, poet and writer, Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi. Since the general population of the country was reduced to

abject poverty, and lawlessness ruled supreme, Sarfi and his advisers thought it best to invite Akbar to Kashmir to put an end to the chronic internecine warfare.

Assured of full support from the majority of the Kashmiris, Akbar made a third attempt at the reduction of the kingdom. An experienced and well trained army under the command of Qasim Khan invaded Kashmir *via* the Pir Panjal pass. Guided by Haidar Chak and Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi, the Mughal army met with little resistance, the wardens of the passes surrendering at its approach. It was, however, at Hirapura that Yaqub offered some resistance, but having lost the confidence of his subjects, he had to flee and on October 14, 1586 the Mughals entered Srinagar in triumph. Kashmir thenceforth became a province of the Mughal Empire and the chapter of its long independent status came to a close.

12

KASHMIR UNDER THE MUGHALS

The Mughals or Mongols, inhabitants of the vast steppe-land of Central Asia, were a race of warlike nomads. Their chequered history is dominated by the exploits of the great conqueror, Genghis Khan, who brought under his banner the various Mongol tribes and clans and established a vast empire extending almost all over Northern Asia. The neighbouring peoples and countries stood in constant awe and dread of his untiring Mongol hordes. It was in the 13th century AD, that the rich plains of Northern India felt the severity of Genghis's scourge when he carried fire and sword to its towns and villages.

After Genghis Khan the branches of the parent tree spread out in different directions. He had four sons among whom the territories of the empire were distributed. Mirza Haider Dughlat in his *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* writes:

> "In assigning his dominions to his four sons, Genghis Khan appears to have followed an ancient Mughal custom. The sons of a chief usually ruled, as their father's deputies, over certain nations or clans, and at his death each received, as an appanage, the section of the population which had been under his care. Thus the distribution was rather tribal than territorial, and the tribes, which were in most cases nomadic, sometimes shifted their abode, or were driven by enemies to migrate from one district to another..."

In this way various branches of the Mughal dynasty shot forth. The Mughals who established their famous empire in India belong to the "Chaghatai branch of Mughal dynasty", after the name of Genghis's second son, Chaghatai Khan.

But in reality they were the descendants of Timur, the Central Asian Turkish king who claimed the Central Asian Mongols as his parent stock and Genghis as one of his ancestors. For, the Mongols lost the purity of blood through inter-marriages with other tribes and this

holds true of the 'Mughals of India'. Writes Elias in his translation of the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi:*

> ".....It will hardly be disputed that not alone Babar himself, but some of his more immediate ancestors, were to all intents and purposes Turks; and this was the case not only in the acquisition of language and manners, but by intermixture of blood; while his successors whose portraits, painted in India, are extant at the present day, show no trace in their features of descent from a Mongoloid race. It is said that Babar's grand father (Sultan Abu Said of Khorasan, 1452-67) was described by a Khiwan contemporary, who visited, him, as a very handsome man with a full beard and unlike a Mughal."[1]

Political history of the nations of the world during various periods affords interesting comparisons in the events taking shape at some stage or the other of their socio-political evolution. India on the eve of the Mughal rule is unmistakably compared by observers with England on the eve of the rise of the Tudors. The people of both countries were smarting under the oppression of feudal lords who were heading for supremacy over one another and the king at the centre was but a puppet in their hands. India of those days was just a conglomeration of independent states with a nominal head at the centre whose jurisdiction was circumscribed within the four walls of his headquarters. For example in Northern India, areas like Bengal, Bihar, Jaunpur, Kashmir, Multan, Sindh, Malwa, Gujarat, and Mewar were independent while in the Deccan there were two independent states of Bahamni and Vijaynagar. This era of medieval aristocracy of Afghans, as it is called, lasted over three centuries in India commencing from Qutb-ud-din Aibak in 1206 AD and culminating in 1526 when Babar the Mughal defeated the last of the Afghan rulers, Ibrahim Lodi, in the battle of Panipat. Ibrahim Lodi a cruel and inefficient king was unable to govern the country and subdue the warring feudal lords. He could not undo the wrongs committed and administrative blunders made by his predecessors from time to time. The government was theocratic. Religious heads were in the forefront of all the administrative activities. Religious persecution on the part of rulers was one of the main reasons for their losing the sympathies of the suffering people who joined hands with other disgruntled elements and rose in revolt against the existing cruelties inflicted on them. Ibrahim adopted high-handed measures to put down their risings. This further

1. Elias and Ross. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi,* p.79

aggravated the trouble resulting in widespread discontent and unrest.

One of the most vicious legacies of this time was the Jagirdari system which continued even long after the end of the Mughal rule in India. These Jagirdars, like the barons of the pre-Tudor period were a source of constant menace to the ruler whom they could give a united front and dethrone and oust any moment. India at that time needed a strong central government which would put down all these warring elements and consolidate afresh the shattered fabric of a united India — politically and economically.

A change of rules was thus the demand of the day. And with the stepping in of the energetic Mughals on the soil of India, an era of peace and plenty was ushered in. It was during the rule of the first five Mughal emperors that India saw again a political unity from the north to the south, brought about no doubt by reconciling the different elements in society.

And with this movement for the consolidation of small kingdoms and principalities into a vast empire, Kashmir could not for long retain its isolated position. Its natural beauty and strategic position attracted early the attention of Babar, the founder of the Mughal empire in India.

Earlier Attempts at Conquest

But even prior to Babar's victory at Panipat in 1526, Kashmir had caught the imagination of the Mughals. Timur's armies while on their march to Hindustan touched its borders. Sultan Sikandar who was then occupying the throne of Kashmir, accepted him as his liege lord and in token thereof sent him two elephants in gift. On his way back to Samarqand, Timur overran Jammu, and while on the borders of the Valley, he stated:

> "I made enquiries about the country and city of Kashmir from men who were acquainted with it, and from them I learnt that... Kashmir is an incomparable country.. In the midst of that country there is a very large and populous city. The rulers of the country dwell there. The buildings of the city are very large and are all of wood, and they are four or five storeys high. They are very strong and will stand for 500 or 700 years. A large river runs through the middle of the city. The inhabitants have cast bridges over the river in nearly thirty places".[2]

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2. *Autobiography of Timur*, pp.96-97.

So when Babar established his rule in northern India, he cast his longing eyes on Kashmir, which was passing through a period of political instability, misrule and religious schism. The repercussions of the victories of Babar in India were naturally felt in Kashmir too, then under the rule of a scion of Shah Mir. The general state of conditions as prevailing in the kingdom then calls for a brief mention.

The period covered by the Sultanate was, with the exception of the rule of Shihab-ud-din, Qutb-ud-din and Zain-ul-abidin, in no way a happy time for the people. The government, centralised in the person of the king, was weak and loose. The later Sultans particularly lacked administrative talent and were puppets in the hands of the power-hungry nobles who used them to gain their own ends, and who were busy with their feuds. The puppet Sultans were made or marred in a day. A dominant noble would at his sweet will even lift the crown off the head of the king and place it either on his own or on that of a person of his choice without the slightest hesitation or compunction. Witness, for example, the action of the powerful noble, Ghazi Chak. He accomplished the feat of this type of 'coronation' without any show of formality or shedding of even a drop of blood. Could there be a greater proof of the effeminate nature of the later rulers of this dynasty?

With the end of the rule of the dynasty of Shah Mir, the Chaks came into power. Their rule lasted for a brief period of 25 years, when the kingdom came under the hegemony of the Imperial Mughals in 1886. The Chaks though brave fighters in the field lacked administrative and political skill, and managed to occupy the throne by sheer force of arms and intrigue. That Kashmir could retain its separate existence in the face of the rising power of the Mughals was due more to its geographical situation and the setbacks that the Mughals received under Humayun than to its political or armed strength.

Babar entered India at the invitation of Daulat Khan, Rana Sanga and others who were at loggerheads with the king of Delhi, Ibrahim Lodi, whose trouble was due largely to maladministration. In the same way the Mughals took advantage of the internal disturbances in Kashmir. With the rising tempo of Shia and Sunni conflicts in the narrow precincts of the Valley, the Mughals made early attempts to take advantage of the weak rule of Sultan Muhammad Shah (1517-28 AD). Babar's army, under the command of Kuchak Beg and Ali Beg marched on Kashmir ostensibly to help a pretender to the throne of Kashmir, but really to bring it under his direct rule. It was repulsed by the redoubtable fighter Kazi Chak, who placed patriotism above personal

interest and power politics. Next year, however, Babar got another pretext to invade Kashmir, when a powerful but disgruntled noble sought his help to restore him to power. An efficient and compact force was deputed from Lahore and helped by the internal feuds, the Mughals easily won a victory and were induced to leave the Valley only on payment of a large ransom and tribute.

The attempt to annex Kashmir was continued by the successors of Babar. In 1531 during the reign of Humayun, Kamran (Humayun's brother and governor of the Punjab), marched with a large army into Kashmir. The Kashmir nobles notably Chaks and Magreys mustered all their strength and presented a solid front to the invaders. A fierce battle ensued between the Mughals and the Kashmir forces under Sultan Muhammad Shah (iv). The Mughals had to retreat in disorder. But a few years later (1540 AD) when Humayun was driven out of Delhi by the superior forces of Sher Shah Suri Kashmir, which had resisted the more powerful armies of Babar and Kamran, came under the *de facto* rule of a handful of Mughal commanders led by Mirza Haider-Dughlat.

We have already traced the rise to power of Mirza Haider under Sultan Abu Said of Kashgar and his invasion of the Valley at the head of his master's contingent of 5,000 cavalrymen. They marched into Kashmir over the Zoji-la route. In the beginning they met with very little resistance and they moved on. Then a very fierce fight was given to the Mughal invaders by the Kashmiris. It resulted in great bloodshed and destruction and ultimately both sides came to terms. Mirza Haider describes the event:

> "The Government of Kashmir was, at that time, conducted in the name of Muhammad Shah. Among the Maliks of Kashmir, after Ali Mir, who was killed (in an engagement with us), there were Abdal Makri, Kazi Chak, Lahur Makri and Yak Chak. When terms of peace were proposed they were very thankful, but they did not credit (our good faith), wondering how people who had once conquered such a beautiful country, could be so senseless as to give it up."

"In a word the *Khutba* was read and coins were struck in the exalted name of the Khan. The revenue of Kashmir, which was due to the Mughals, we took. One of Muhammad Shah's daughters was wedded to Iskandar Sultan. And everyone, according to his rank, formed a connection (*mulakat*) with one of the Sultans or Maliks of Kashmir. I, for example, became connected with Muhammad Shah, and in accordance with the Mughal practice we called each other "friend". Similar (rela-

tions) were established between Mir Daim Ali and Abdal Makri; Mirza Ali Taghai and Lahur Makri; Baba Sarik Mirza and Kazi Chak; my uncle's son Mahmud Mirza and Yak Chak. Numerous presents and offerings were interchanged."[3]

Mirza Haider and his army returned leaving behind them a trail of misery and destruction in the form of derelict, hungry and uprooted population. Mirza Dughlat, however, left the service of Kashgar rulers on the death of Abu Said, and joined Humayun, who was a close relation of his. Here another opportunity presented itself to the Mirza to bring Kashmir under the direct rule of Humayun.

Sultan Shams-ud-din II (1537-38) who came to the throne of Kashmir was, as usual, under the domination of the powerful noble who shaped the fate of the Sultans of this period — Kaji Chak. He was the virtual ruler except for the title. His highhandedness embittered the feelings of the people and the Magreys were busy intriguing against him. This state of affairs continued for a few years until the reign of Sultan Ismail Shah II (1538-40) when dissension again set in among the nobles of Kashmir. The Magreys appealed to Mirza Haider for help against the Chaks and Haider advised Humayun to seize this opportunity and conquer Kashmir.

But Humayun was at that time facing a stiff opposition from the armies of Sher Shah Suri, who ultimately forced him to flee from Agra to Lahore. While there Mirza Dughlat proposed that Humayun along with his harem and devoted followers proceed to Kashmir and set up the nucleus of his government there, but Kamran did not agree. Later, however, when the Afghan forces of Sher Shah became more aggressive and Humayun had to abandon Lahore, he asked Mirza Dughlat to proceed to Kashmir with a small force and secure the Valley for him.

Mirza Haider writes:

> "At the time when the general assemblage took place in Lahur, Haji carried many messages to and fro, between myself on the one hand and Abdal Makri on the other, in furtherance of my plan. All terminated in a most desirable way, and I was thus able to impress it strongly on the Emperor. I showed him the letter which had been sent to me, and he became convinced that Kashmir would be conquered as soon as I should appear there."

So the Mirza advanced into Kashmir and helped by Magrey con-

3. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, English translation. p. 441.

quered it with ease. True to his master he neither installed himself as the ruler of Kashmir, nor thought it expedient to declare Humayun as the overlord, as the latter had virtually lost such a position. Instead he installed Nazuk Shah of Kashmir as the Sultan under, of course, his regency. Haider deserves credit for this act of sagacity and fidelity.

Some territories were added to Kashmir. In the beginning Mirza Haider endeavoured to undo the wrongs caused by the constant feuds and religious persecution which had become the bane of Kashmir for nearly a century. It must have certainly been very difficult for Mirza to do much in this direction in a short time as centuries-old evils could not be done away with in decades. Nevertheless, he did try to raise the economic condition of the people which was fast deteriorating. But while trying to set up orthodox practices in religion, he ruthlessly suppressed the followers of the Shia faith, who were mostly the Chaks, his political opponents. Matters came to such a pass that the Mirza had to face a strong opposition and lost his life in one of the skirmishes.

Mirza Dughlat's exit from the scene marks the end of the rule of Shah Mir's dynasty and beginning of the rise of the Chaks to power. During their brief rule the kingdom witnessed a general deterioration in the political and economic condition of the people, and outbursts of religious frenzy. The Chaks were great fighters but lacked political wisdom. As administrators they were very weak. The Mughal attempts to conquer Kashmir were helped by the deteriorating internal condition of the Kingdom and Akbar who had already subjugated the surrounding territories took advantage of this weakness. Kashmir fell into his hands as a result of something short of fair military conquest and some of his actions in this drama are not above reproach. Forster, a traveller who visited the Valley two centuries later observes:

> "Akbar subdued it; aided more, it is said, by intrigue, than the force of his arms. Kashmir remained annexed to the house of Timur for the space of one hundred and sixty years..."

The handle to extend his influence was supplied by the Sunni-Shia conflict raging in Kashmir under the Chak Sultans. They presented petitions and appeals for aid to the Emperor at Agra, and Akbar entertained and received well the deputations of Kashmiris that waited on him from time to time. He promised active support to them with the ultimate aim, of course, of conquering the kingdom. His personal interest in the sorry state of Kashmir affairs became marked during the reign of Hussain Shah Chak (1563-1570) when internal dissension was at its

highest. He deputed his envoys to Kashmir to make an enquiry into the trouble. The Sultan received them well and offered them presents and agreed to give his own daughter in marriage to Akbar's son Salim. But Akbar who was enraged at the persecution of the Sunnis and the delay in the conquest of Kashmir, could not be appeased by even such a humble gesture. He refused the presents of Hussain Shah and his daughter. This insult is said to have shocked the Sultan to death. Later in the reign of Hussain Shah's brother, Ali Shah Chak, the presents and Hussain Shah's daughter were accepted but only when the Sultan recognised Akbar as his overlord. The Mughal attempts at conquest continued till the year 1586, when Bhagwan Dass and other generals were commanded by Akbar to march into Kashmir. Akbar did not personally march at the head of his army, but sent his trusted men to accomplish the deed. Kashmir was then ruled by the ease-loving king Yusuf Shah Chak who being a weak ruler could not keep in check his warring nobles or suppress the Sunni-Shia conflicts of which the people were very much tired. Helped by the inclemency of weather and the natural defences, the Kashmir forces succeeded in halting the advance of the mighty but cumbrous Mughal army. The Mughal general Baghwan Dass appealed to Yusuf Shah Chak to come to terms. Yusuf Shah agreed and was invited to the Mughal camp. He went in good faith, was taken to the imperial court, only to be imprisoned. In the meantime his son Yaqub Khan came to the vacant throne.

During Yaqub's reign, there was still greater unrest due to religious persecution of the Sunnis. The people could no longer stand this cruelty and some leading persons like Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi, an eminent scholar of his time, and Baba Daud Khaki headed a deputation to the Mughal court. They apprised the Emperor of the situation in the kingdom. He promised to redress the grievances of the oppressed people. They got assurance from the monarch that their basic rights and demands would be upheld. They were assured of religious freedom and freedom in their internal affairs. There would be no forced labour as was prevalent in Kashmir for centuries. They were assured that the nobles who brought ruin to the Sultans of Kashmir, would no longer be tolerated in the Mughal regime.

This was a tempting invitation and a welcome offer which Akbar would not miss. So disgusted were the people with the weak and inefficient rule of the kings that they preferred a strong rule from the Centre, even though it meant the loss of their independent but isolated position. They were not disappointed, as the advent of the Mughal rule ushered in an era of peace and prosperity.

Akbar sent his general Qasim Khan in the year 1586 to invade Kashmir. Yaqub Khan, the last Chak Sultan took flight as his ranks got depleted by wholesale desertion of his followers.

Though Qasim Khan had won the day and occupied the capital, he was not left in peace. It took a long time to effect the pacification of Kashmir and the suppression of the resistance offered by the Kashmiris to Mughal domination.

Resistance from Kashmiris

Yaqub Shah, as we have seen, had fled to Kishtwar at the defeat of his forces by Qasim Khan, but the Raja of that principality, Bahadur Singh, who was his father-in-law, did not approve of his giving in till the last. Taunted by Bahadur, he returned to the Valley and collecting a number of devoted followers, launched a surprise raid on the forces of Qasim Khan, who were by then feeling uncomfortable with the advent of winter. Meanwhile Shams Chak, another powerful scion of his dynasty was contesting every inch of the territory occupied by the Mughals. Yaqub's small army from the south and Shams's from the north of Srinagar had thus taken the benumbed Mughal forces between the prongs of a vice which was being tightened every moment.

From Yaqub Shah's headquarters at Chandrakot and Shams Chak's seat at Sopore, small parties of raiders would make surprise attacks on the Mughals in the city and carry off their rations and equipment. Qasim, in order to end this menace, sent a strong contingent against Yaqub at Chandrakot, but the latter learning of this in advance, moved down to launch an attack on the Mughal headquarters at Srinagar. A bloody battle ensued and Qasim had to abandon the palace, which was reoccupied by Yaqub. Elated at this success against the mighty Mughals, Yaqub ordered the execution of Hussain Khan who had been proclaimed as king by a section of the rebles at Hirapur. Yaqub committed another act of indiscretion. He announced that he would kill all those who had deserted him in the battle against Qasim when he initially invaded Kashmir. This at once alienated some of the more influential lords who became apprehensive of meeting a dire fate at Yaqub's hands.

Learning of these serious defections in Yaqub's camp, Qasim launched a strong counter-offensive and Yaqub had to flee again for his life.

By that time the winter had taken the Valley in its cold grip, and both Yaqub and Shams Chak repaired to their places of refuge — the

former to Kistwar and the latter to the hills of Karnah. The less important nobles like Hussain Khan and Muhammad Bhatt, thinking the resistance to the might of Akbar futile, surrendered to Qasim who, after giving an assurance of pardon and personal safety, sent them to the court of Akbar at Agra.

In the spring of 1887, the fighting was resumed. Yaqub returning from Kishtwar set up his headquarters near Avantipura, to the south-east of Srinagar and Shams Chak occupied Sopore again. For some time daily skirmishes were taking place in the city. Mughal army was practically besieged in their barracks. Ultimately Qasim Khan came out in full force against Yaqub but suffered a reverse. Encouraged by this victory Shams Chak also moved nearer to Srinagar and encamped at Hanjik to the west of the city.

Qasim Khan now moved out in person against Yaqub and encountering him near the hill of Sankaracharya, inflicted a defeat on him. Yaqub had to flee for his life, but being a hard nut to crack, he approached Shams Chak for an alliance against the Mughals. Shams readily agreed and both of them launched a severe attack on Qasim Khan's forces, inflicting a crushing defeat on him.

Taking shelter behind the fortifications of the city, the Mughal army was subjected to relentless pressure by the Kashmiris. They carried out night attacks on the city itself in which they took away their horses, equipment and supplies. Qasim Khan became very much dejected and submitted a petition to the Emperor, requesting him to send an abler commander to replace him, admitting thereby his failure in pacifying the province.

Akbar, thereupon, despatched a strong army under the command of Yusuf Khan Rizvi with two Kashmiri nobles, Baba Khalil and Muhammad Bhatt, to guide and assist him in the reduction and administration of the Valley.

Learning of the march of a mighty force to reinforce the Mughal army in Kashmir, Yaqub planned an attack on it in a defile near the Pir Panjal pass. But most of his followers had by then realised that the might of Mughal Imperialism was too much for them and it was therefore prudent to discretely lay down their arms. This demoralised the rest of Yaqub's followers and thus the Kashmiri resistance forces were completely disintegrated. Yaqub went in disgust to Kishtwar, while Shams Chak retired to the hills in Karnah.

Yusuf Rizvi was a clever diplomat and an able administrator. He

adopted a policy of conciliation and won over many chiefs. Against Shams Chak he sent a strong force which defeated his followers and compelled him to retire to the hills. Another force was sent against Yaqub who had meantime come back from Kistwar. Yaqub made a brave stand against the Mughal forces, but finding defections rampant in his camp, he again escaped to Kistwar. Thereupon Shams Chak surrendered to the Mughals, having become convinced that it was futile to put up a fight against the superior forces of the Mughal Emperor.

Yaqub Surrenders at Last

It was only in 1589, on Akbar's first visit to the Valley, that Yaqub Shah decided to give up the struggle and submit. Accordingly he returned from Kishtwar and towards the end of July paid personal homage to Akbar, who pardoned him and sent him to Raja Man Singh at Rohtas. Here he was kept a virtual prisoner lest he escape again and create trouble for the Mughals in Kashmir. On his father, Yusuf Shah's death, Man Singh transferred his rank to him and allowed him to draw the allowance from his Jagir. While proceeding to his Jagir, he was offered poisoned betel leaves by Qasim Khan who claimed to be a son of Yusuf Shah Chak, and Yaqub's brother. He ate the leaves and by the time he reached Behira in Bihar, he died (Oct. 1593). His body was carried to Biswak and buried there near the grave of his father, Yusuf Shah.

With all opposition crushed effectively, the imperial rule of the Mughals was ushered in with the first visit of Emperor Akbar to the Valley in the summer of 1589. Says Dr Stein:

> "Akbar's conquest marks the commencement of modern history of Kashmir...... Though the conservative instinct of the population was bound to maintain much of the old traditions and customs, yet the close connection with a great empire and the free intercourse with other territories subject to it necessarily transformed in many ways the political and economic situation......."

The people enjoyed a fresh quantum of peace and goodwill after the rigours of medieval rule characterised by oppression, maladministration and unrest. No doubt Sultan Zain-ul-abidin's reign was an exception but generally the condition of the people was all but happy under the rule of the previous kings.

Kashmir Becomes a Mughal Province

The Mughals ushered in an era of expansion, consolidation and

construction. The "Subha of Cashmeer," records Abdul Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, "composed of Kashmir, Pakhli, Bhimber, Swat Bijore, Qandahar, and Zabulistan," with Kabul as its capital. It became part and parcel of the vast Mughal empire, and shook off the centuries-old isolation and seclusion. Its natural beauty attracted people from all over Asia. It was a great highway of Central Asian trade which flourished during this period. The Mughals were great builders and administrators. They paved the way for national unity by following a policy of secularism and consolidated India into an organic whole by introducing a sound pattern of administration. Sir Jadhunath Sarkar enumerates the salient features of their rule in India thus:

> "(a) The uniform administrative type throughout the Subhas; (b) one official language; (c) one uniform system of coinage; (d) an all-India cadre of higher public services, the officers being transferred from province to province every three or four years; (e) the frequent march of large armies from province to province and; (f) deputation of inspecting officers from the central capital."

The Subha of Kashmir was placed under the control of a Subhedar appointed by the Central Government. He was answerable to the Centre for any lapse in administration. True, the pattern of the Mughal administration was unit-wise and each unit was controlled by the concerned head and the work of administration was thus conducted smoothly, but the Subhedar had to follow a uniform code of administration and law set up by the Centre. Accordingly the Subha of Kashmir like other Subhas comprised a good number of Sirkars, each under the control of a person called the Kotwal. The Kotwal had to look after law and order, public welfare, sanitation, etc, in his assigned area. The officer in charge of the collection of revenue in the Srikar was called the Mansebdar. Besides, he administered justice. But criminal cases were very rare. According to the *Ain-i-Akbari*, 'although Cashmeer is populous, and money scarce, yet a thief or a beggar is scarcely known amongst them.'

The Mughal Subhedars deputed to Kashmir, with the exception of a few, were good administrators and looked after the welfare of the people, particularly as the Mughal emperors who often visited Kashmir took special interest in this Subha and its people. They were enamoured of its charm and glamour. All the Mughal emperors craved earnestly for the welfare of the people of Kashmir. Bernier writes: "It is not indeed without reason that the Mughals call *Kachemire* the terrestrial paradise of the *Indies* or that *Ekbar* was so unremitting in his efforts to wrest the sceptre from the hands of its native prince. His son *Jehanguyre* became

so enamoured of this little kingdom as to make it the place of his favourite abode, and he often declared that he would rather be deprived of every other province of his mighty empire than lose *Kachemire*." Enjoying a privileged position the people of Kashmir gradually grew to be conscious of their rights and even a slight grievance of theirs would arrest the attention of the Central Government forthwith. In this connection George Forster who visited Kashmir in 1783 writes:

> "The interests of this province were so strongly favoured at the court, that every complaint against its governors was attentively listened to, and any attempt to molest the people restrained or punished."

Akbar

Akbar's reign over Kashmir lasted 19 years. During his reign Kashmir was ruled by four Subhedars. Chronologically they were:

Mirza Qasim, 1586-87;
Mirza Yusuf Khan Rizvi, 1587-1590;
Muhammad Qulich Khan, 1590-1601; and
Mirza Ali Akbar, 1601-1606.

We have seen that Mirza Qasim's regime of one year as the Subhedar of Kashmir passed in facing armed opposition from Yaqub and Shams Chak. He had thus no time or opportunity to conduct a smooth administration. It was only under Yusuf Khan Rizvi that the Mughal institutions in administration were introduced.

The people were happy under him. Yusuf Rizvi engaged himself in undoing the evils of the past regime and subduing the last remnants of the warring elements which were still present in the province. Two years after its conquest, Akbar personally visited Kashmir. This visit was not merely for pleasure but had deep significance in so far as he studied the political and administrative set-up of the Subha and took personal cognizance of the people's wishes and demands. The Emperor was hailed by the people of all communities, young and old, with joy. His presence at a time when the people had just emerged from the lean centuries of distress and discord, warmed up their hearts with new hopes and promises. The contemporary chronicler Suka gives an eye witness account of the event in these words:

> "Now Jyalaladina came to see the kingdom of Kashmira

adorned with saffron, walnut, fruits and flowers. The wives of the citizens hastened to see the king. One woman pointed out the king to her beloved female friend who was anxious to see him; another exclaimed with a flutter that she had seen that leader of the army; another woman with threats to her child (who wanted to drink of her milk) covered her breast and went (to have a view of the king). After the people of Kashmir had seen the sovereign, a continuous festivity was held in every house."[4]

The Emperor made a signal announcement at the very outset, assuring the people that he would redress all their grievances. He graciously abolished all distinction based on religious sentiment. In the time of the Chak rulers, the Sunnis were persecuted and the Brahmins could perform their religious practices on payment of taxes, fines and other tributes. Akbar removed inocuous exactions and thus established practically the brotherhood of man. In this connection Suka records:

> ".....For the preservation of his sacred thread a Brahmana annually paid a tribute of forty *panas* to the king... Now when king Jyalaladina learnt of the condition of the Brahmanas, he repealed the practice of levying fines on them, which had prevailed since the time of the kings of the house of Chakka. He announced that he would without delay reward those who would respect the Brahmanas in Kashmira, and that he would instantly pull down the houses of those who would take the annual tribute from them....."

The emperor further endeared himself to the Kashmiri Pandits when he proceeded to Martand, according to the chronicler Suka, distributed cows adorned with pearls and gold to his new Brahmin subjects

The presence of the Mughal soldiers in the city was very much resented by the people. These soldiers caused great distress to them harassing and insulting them at every turn. This came to the notice of Akbar who ordered a new town to be constructed, away from the civilian population, where his soldiers and attendants would dwell. The chosen site was the Hari Parbat hillock where the town was built. It was called Nagar Nagar and was whitewashed and very well decorated. The place presented a sharp contrast to the existing capital which, as ill luck would have it, got burnt as soon as the new town was formally occupied by the Emperor's soldiers. The people were, however, a good deal relieved of the inconvenience caused by the soldiers. In the words of Suka: "When the Yavanas had gone out of the old city the people had a festivity; they always blessed king Jyalaladina, and

4. Kings of Kashmira

were happy."

Nor was this all. This Emperor announced that no soldiers would inflict any loss on the cultivators and there are instances when the Mughal Subhedars under the direction of the Emperor took severe action against those who harassed or in any way disturbed the peace of the Valley.

On one occasion Mirza Laskara the son of Yusuf Khan saw a soldier putting people to trouble. He at once ordered that the soldier be arrested forthwith. His men failed to trace out the culprit. But in order to strike terror in the minds of others so as an incident like this might not be repeated, he ordered a boat laden with logs to be set on fire in the middle of the river Jhelum. This action certainly told well in so far as the people were struck with fear and awe, thinking that he had burnt the culprit alive in the boat.

Akbar's first visit to Kashmir produced some notable results. In was, for instance, at his suggestion that some of the boats in the Valley were transformed into residential boats very nearly resembling the modern houseboat. He gave a fillip to several industries, particularly to shawl manufacture. After spending six weeks in the Valley, Akbar left by the Baramula route. Mirza Yusuf Khan, the governor of Kashmir accompanied the Emperor to Agra. His cousin, Mirza Yadgar, was kept in charge of the new province.

New Revenue Assessment Resented

While in Kashmir, Akbar found that the revenue assessment of the Valley was not in line with that prevailing in the rest of India. Consequently, he thought, the state revenues fell far short of the paying capacity of the Kashmiris.

Mirza Yusuf Khan had already reported that the assessment which he had proposed was too high. But he sent two officials, Qazi Nur Ullah and Qazi Ali, to investigate the question and to carry out revenue settlement of the Valley on the lines of Todarmal. On reaching Kashmir, they found the local officials uncooperative and the people sullen. They could not carry out their settlement and complained to the Emperor against the officiating governor, Mirza Yadgar and his subordinates. Akbar, thereupon, sent two more officials Hassan Beg and Sheikh Umra to assist Qazi Ali in his work.

Since very early times the whole of the land in Kashmir was considered as the property of the ruler. Some portions of the *Khalsa*

5. Ibid, p. 420.

land were granted in Jagir for various period. "Although formerly the government was said to take only a third of the produce of the soil, yet in fact the husbandman was not left in the enjoyment of near one-half." Qazi Ali confiscated all the Jagirs and overrating the State's share of the produce, raised the assessment to more than half of the produce. He moreover, fixed the pay and emoluments of the officials and soldiers in cash, as against the prevailing custom of making payment in kind (grain). The new assessment was resented by the Kashmiri nobles as well as by the Mughal soldiers posted in the Valley. The Mughal officials and military commanders were convinced that if the centre persisted in levying revenue at enhanced rates, little or nothing would be left for them and their troops and encourged by personal jealousies between Mirza Yadgar and Qazi Ali, they rose in arms and elected as their leader Mirza Yadgar, the governor's cousin, who assumed the royal title and caused the *Khutba* to be recited in his own name. Qazi Ali and Hassan Beg, who were forced to flee, were attacked by the rebels. Qazi Ali lost his life while fighting on the outskirts of the Valley but Hassan Beg managed to escape and reaching Agra narrated the sad tale to the Emperor.

To nip the mischief in the bud, Akbar immediately despatched three strong army contingents to suppress the revolt. Zain Khan led his army through the Jhelum valley and Sadiq Khan over the Tosamaidan pass. The third force was despatched via Jammu. Not content with having taken these strong measures, Akbar decided to proceed to Kashmir in person. A strong army was mobilised and on 3 July, 1592, the Emperor left Lahore for Kashmir by the Pir Panjal route. At Bhimber he learnt that the forces which he had sent in advance had dispersed the rebels at the foot of the pass and that the imperial cavalcade could now safely cross into the Valley. Mirza Yadgar, mustering a small force, was planning an attack on the Mughal forces at Hirapur, but most of his commanders deserted to the imperial side. He was captured and put to death and his head was presented to the Emperor, who advanced and on 14 October entered Srinagar. Mirza Yusuf Khan resigned professing himself unable to administer the province under the enhanced assessment, and the whole province was, therefore, classed as crown land and was placed under the charge of Khwaja Shams-ud-din, who had charge of the finances of the Punjab.

While in Kashmir, Akbar held a grand *Durbar* and distributed in alms the gold and silver with which he had weighed himself. Thousands were fed at his expense for a number of days. He dealt heavy punishment to the insurgents, and bestowed riches and rank on those who

had remained loyal to him during Yadgar's rebellion. To strengthen his hold on Kashmir, he married a daughter of Shams Chak, and his son Salim, took a daughter of Hussain Chak into his harem.

Due to the misgovernment of the kingdom by the Chak rulers, the plight of the people was pitiable. To give employment to the poor and starving people, Akbar ordered the construction of a bastion wall round the Hari Parbat hill, and also a palace and a city inside the fortifications.

It was an administrative necessity that brought the Kashmiri Pandits into the imperial governing structure. With long traditions as administrative servants, they had turned to mastery of Persian over a century prior to Todar Mal's decision to make Persian the court language.

Hence there was a massive recruitment of Pandits to the imperial administrative service which made it easy for the settlement of land and assessment of revenue entrusted by the emperor to Todar Mal. Previously Qazi Ali had fixed, the revenue at 3,063,050 *Kharwars.* Todar Mal fixed the revenue at 3,079,543 *Kharwars*, out of which 10,153,301 *Kharwars* were to be paid in cash. "Although", writes Abdul Fazal, "this settlement exceeds that of Qazi Ali, but calculating at the present rate, the amount to be collected is actually less by 860,342 *dams* because the Qazi overrated the money *Kharwar*."

After staying in the Valley for more than three months during which he visited several health resorts and saw the saffron in blossom, Akbar left via the Jhelum valley route. From Srinagar he went by boat to Baramula, passing over the Wular lake and feasting in the island-palace of Zain-ul-abidin. Apart from strengthening his hold on the Valley, this visit afforded the Emperor a clearer picture of the economic possibilities of his newly-acquired territory and also the cultural heritage of its inhabitants. Akbar and his successors who were great patrons of art and literature thenceforth held the Kashmiris in great respect.

Quli Khan as governor

On his arrival at Lahore, Akbar appointed Muhammad Quli Khan as the governor. The new governor found still some live embers of rebellion among the scions of the Chak dynasty and influential nobles. Moreover, the people in general, though having peaceful times, had not yet taken to the overlordship of the Imperial Mughals. Quli Khan hence adopted a policy of ruthless suppression of unruly elements, and the conciliation of peace-loving subjects. The Chaks who had not yet reconciled themselves to Akbar's overlordship were his special targets of punishment. He

did not spare even Shams Chak and Hussain Chak whose daughters were taken by Akbar and Salim in marriage, and when they showed signs of unrest and rebellion, had them beheaded by the soldiers of Mulla Jamil.

Quli Khan supervised the building of the great wall round Hari Parbat and the royal palace. The city inside the wall was also growing fast. More than 200 skilled workers were sent from India and the total cost of the construction came to 11,000,000 (Akbarshahi). The local labour was paid well and no *corvee* was levied.

When after eight years the fort and the new palace were completed, Quli Khan invited the Emperor to pay a third visit to Kashmir. In July 1598, Akbar arrived in Srinagar via the Pir Panjal pass after visiting the famous health resorts of the southern district of the Valley. Father Gerome Xavier, a Navarese of high birth, and Benoist de Gois the first Europeans to visit Kashmir, accompanied Akbar this time. Short sketches of the Kashmiri people were recorded by Father Xavier which were published in Antwerp in 1560. It appears that the Valley was then in the grip of a severe famine. Harrowing tales of the devastation and misery resulting from this calamity were recorded by the Portuguese Priest Pierre du Jarric in his interesting account of Akbar and his court.

The Great Famine

The severity of famine was aggravated by the influx of Akbar's large retinue. The Emperor, however, did all in his power to institute relief measures. Thousands of maunds of foodgrains were imported from Pakhli, Bhimber and Western Punjab. Nearly a lakh of people were fed daily in the Idgah. Huge public works by way of building forts, roads and canals were undertaken to provide employment to the starving population. Fortunately the crop that year was abundant and the famine conditions abated.

The Emperor inaugurated the new city and named it Nagar Nagar. There were several luxurious palaces in the city. To celebrate the inauguration of Nagar Nagar and also the end of the famine, Akbar participated in the festivities connected with the birthday of the Vitasta in the same manner as Zain-ul-abidin used to do. On the 13 of the bright fortnight of Bhadun, both the banks of the river were illuminated with thousands of tiny lamps and the king went out on the river in a luxurious barge specially made for the occasion. The hills round Srinagar and the houses, illuminated with lamps and torches, afforded a picturesque scene. At the end of the festivities the emperor held a *Durbar*.

Subjugation of Ladakh

It was during Akbar's third visit to Kashmir that he seriously planned to bring Ladakh and Baltistan under his rule. But since Kashmir was passing through a time of severe famine, and there were not enough food reserves to last for the duration of the campaign, the invasion was not mounted, and instead Akbar sent his envoys to the Raja of Ladakh to accept his suzerainty. But before the envoys could reach Leh the capital of Ladakh, the Chief of Baltistan, Ali Rai, in conjunction with the chief minister of Ladakh, Aju Raj, brought Ladakh under his subjugation. This incensed the Emperor and calling a reinforcement of 3,000 cavalry and 500 musketeers from Lahore, ordered an attack on Ali Rai. On the approach of the Mughal forces the chief took to his heels and without firing a shot Baltistan and Ladakh were occupied by the Mughals.

With the advent of winter Akbar and his retinue left for the warmer plains of India after spending more than three months in the Valley. In 1601, he recalled Muhammad Quli Khan who had put in 11 years of service as the governor of Kashmir.

Quli Khan under whom Kashmir was completely pacified, was succeeded by Mirza Ali Akbar. The latter had not much to do by way of reform, the line and pattern of administration having already been set by Quli Khan. Under Ali Akbar, however, there were several unfortunate outbreaks of epidemics and the Valley was devastated by famines and floods which occurred frequently. The Emperor, however, sent supplies of grain from Lahore and Sialkot which mitigated their severity. It was in Ali Akbar's fourth year of governorship that the Emperor Akbar breathed his last in 1605 AD.

Jehangir

Jehangir who succeeded his father Akbar, had fallen in love with the natural beauty of Kashmir since the day he paid his first visit to the Valley in the company of his father in 1589. A great Mughal par excellence, he was at the same time a man of scholarly habits and a lover of natural beauty. A spirit of scientific enquiry, though cramped by the empirical knowledge of the middle ages characterised his principal pastime, namely, observation and collection of flora and fauna.

Jehangir had a number of sojourns in Kashmir. The primary object was undoubtedly that of health or as the Irish poet Thomas Moore puts it in the *Lalla Rookh*, to fly "from power and pomp, and the trophies of

war". But this also enabled the monarch to indulge in his love of nature, to feast his eyes and to quench his thirst for knowledge. Some of the florid passages in his memoirs *Tuzk-i-Jehangiri,* record the beauties of the Valley of Kashmir. For instance,

> "If one were to take to praise Kashmir, whole books would have to be written. Accordingly a mere summary will be recorded."
>
> "Kashmir is a garden of eternal spring, or an iron fort to a palace of kings—a delightful flower-bed, and heart-expanding heritage for dervishes. Its pleasant meads and enchanting cascades are beyond count. Wherever the eye reaches, there are verdure and running water. The red rose, the violet, and the narcissus grow of themselves; in the fields, there are all kinds of flowers and all sorts of sweet-scented herbs more than can be calculated. In the soul enchanting spring the hills and plains are filled with blossoms; the gates, the walls, the courts, the roofs are lighted up by the torches of banquet-adorning tulips. What shall we say of these things or of the wide meadows and the fragrant trefoil?"

Jehangir and his versatile queen visited Kashmir several times and spent the hot summer months in its delightfully cool valley and mountain meadows. His presence naturally prevented any abuse of power by the governors who administered the kingdom. For Kashmiris Jehangir's reign is synonymous with justice and fair play. He would personally look into the grievances and demands of the people and pass suitable orders on the spot. Mirza Ali Akbar the last governor under Akbar's rule, continued to occupy the post for three years after Jehangir's accession to the throne. He was followed by five incumbents of the office, namely, Hasham Khan (1609-12), Sardar Khan (1612-15), Ahmed Beg (1615-18), Dilawar Khan (1618-20), Iradat Khan (1620-22), Itqad Khan (1622-33).

Excepting for the last governor, Itqad Khan, all others were broad-minded and lovable persons. They conducted the administration of the province efficiently and carefully looked after the well-being of the people.

Plague And Fire

It was during the governorship of Ahmad Beg in 1615 that an epidemic of plague broke out in a virulent form. In a few days thousands of people died in the Valley. There was no remedy then available to combat it, and the epidemic subsided by itself after a few weeks.

Another calamity fell on the people when more than12,000 houses were destroyed in a conflagration in Srinagar. The Jama Masjid which was also reduced to ashes was rebuilt at State expense.

The period of Dilawar Khan's governorship, though very brief, is notable for laying out of gardens and building palaces and pavilions. His name is still borne by a garden in the heart of the city of Srinagar, on the banks of a lagoon formed by the backwaters of the Dal lake.

Conquest Of Kishtwar

Kishtwar which was still maintaining an independent status was conquered during Dilawar Khan's governorship. He marched on the principality with a large army. The remnants of the Chak leaders and forces had made Kishtwar their headquarters, and they still cherished the dreams of reoccupying Kahmir and establishing their rule there. Dilawar Khan was aided by his sons Jamal, Jalal, Hassan, and his brother Haibat. While Dilawar Khan led the main force against the Raja, Jamal, Jalal and Haibat marched on from different directions. A fierce fight ensued and one of the Chak leaders named Aiba Chak who was fighting ferociously on the side of the Raja was killed in action. The Raja was defeated and made prisoner, and brought before the emperor in Srinagar. The emperor was highly pleased with Dilawar Khan's exploits and expressed his appreciation by granting him one year's revenue from Kishtwar in reward. On his return to Agra in the autumn of 1620, he took Dilawar Khan along with himself, appointing Iradat Khan in his Place.

Iradat Khan followed the fashion of the times in laying out a delightful garden on the outskirts of Srinagar.

Jehangir, the great lover of natural beauty as he was, could not but come under the spell of Kashmir. Wherever he found a hill coming down gently to a spring or a grove of chenars, or a beautiful lake, he utilised the place for planting a pleasure garden. He took to the systematic planting of the *Char Chenari* or a chenar tree planted at each of the ordinal points so as to produce shade at whichever point the sun may be. The massing of flowers, the construction of miniature pleasure houses entirely subservient to the garden design, and constructed right across the water channel through which the spring water was drawn, was the chief plan of the garden adopted by him.

Shalamar and Nishat, laid out on the slopes of the mountain coming down on the eastern bank of the charming Dal lake are perhaps the best gift from the Mughals to the people of the Valley.

The Shalamar garden was laid out by the emperor in the years 1619. The Nishat Bagh was laid out by Nur Jehan's brother Asaf Khan. The famous springs of Verinag and Achhabal, with their natural gushing waters were dressed up by the Mughals who gave fine artistic shape to these natural objects. In 1620 Jehangir got an "octagonal tank of sculptured stones" made round the spring at Verinag. Nur Jehan was similarly attracted by another spring, at Achhabal, six miles from Anantnag. A beautiful garden with fruit trees and running fountains was laid out by her near the spring. The garden was called "Begamabad" and also "Sahibabad".

Jehangir was not, however, carried off his feet by the natural attractions of Kashmir. He was equally moved by the suffering and pain brought on human beings by Man himself or by Nature. He set himself to the task of stamping out pernicious customs of Sati, infanticide, forced conversions among either community and the like. In some areas of the kingdom the Muslim women like their Hindu sisters used to end their lives at the death of their husbands. They were buried alive along with the dead bodies just as the Hindu widows burnt themselves in the funeral pyre of their husbands. Girl babies were killed at their birth. Such heartless and cruel customs touched the soft chord of the emperor's heart. He forthwith put a stop to these inhuman practices. It was reported to him that in some hilly parts there existed the custom of inter-marriages between Hindus and Muslims. A Hindu could marry a Muslim girl and vice versa. Jehangir did not approve of it, and he prohibited the marriage of a Muslim girl to a Hindu. Some of the iniquitous taxes like the Rasum-i-Faujdari were also abolished by him. No wonder the Valley flourished under Jehangir. The revenue from the province rose to 74,670,000 *dams*, a sure sign of the prosperity of the people,

Itqad Khan, who occupied the gubernatorial chair for more than 11 years was a cruel tyrant, and his harsh treatment of the people marred the otherwise golden record of Jehangir's rule in Kashmir. He instituted some exacting levies, as for instance, free supply of fruit to government officials, provision of free labour by villagers for carrying the luggage of the governor and his retinue, etc. Above all he tyrannised over the Shia sect. He struck such awe among the people that they dared not complain against him to the emperor.

It was during his time that in 1627 Jehangir paid his last visit to Kashmir. He had been ailing for some months and had come to the Valley to recoup his health. When the summer was nearly over he was advised to move down to the warmer plains of India. Reluctantly he

accepted the advice, but on reaching Behramgala the disease took a serious turn and on 7 November, 1627 he breathed his last. While on his deathbed he had expressed the wish that his body be carried back to Verinag and buried there. But it was not thought expedient and instead he was buried at Lahore. The poet has feelingly rendered the scene in the following Persian stanza:

Az Shah-i-Jehangir dame naz'a chu justand
Ba khwahish-i-dil guft ki Kashmir digar hich.

When at the time of death Jehangir was asked what he desired,
With the desire of heart he replied — "Kashmir and nothing else."

Shah Jehan

Jehangir was succeeded by his son, Shah Jehan, who ruled from 1627 to 1658. The emperor took a greater interest in the welfare of Kashmir than his father. He paid several visits to the Valley and the beauty of Kashmir's lakes and rivers, its mountain meadows and springs fascinated him. He developed a soft corner in his heart for the inhabitants of the Happy Valley and looked after them with loving care. A great builder as he was, he has left his memory in the several gardens, mosques and *serais* which were built under his directions in Kashmir.

Under Shah Jehan Kashmir was ruled by nine governors in succession. Some of them are still remembered as embodiments of justice and good government. The services rendered by Subhedars like Zaffar Kha.., Ali Mardan Khan and Lashkar Khan to their master, the emperor, and to the people of Kashmir have been appreciatively recorded by contemporary historians.

Itqad Khan, the last governor of Jehangir continued to hold office for a further period of six years after the accession of Shah Jehan to the throne. A near relation of Nur Jehan, he had, during the time of Jehangir, indulged with impunity in tyrannical rule and levied iniquitous taxes on several commodities and particular communities. The people were harassed by him. *Begar* or forced labour was levied for the collection of saffron. Nor could he calm down the disgruntled elements among the Chaks who raised a rebellion. It was put down with a strong hand and some of the rebels who escaped death fled to Baltistan where they were given protection by the ruler of that principality.

It would be convenient to enumerate here some of the misdoings of the Subhedar to appreciate the benevolent activities of his successors.

The farmers of villages round about Pampore were forced to collect the saffron harvest (a monopoly of the State) without the payment of wages. A surcharge of four *dams* was levied on each *Kharwar* of rice collected in revenue. It became customary with villages where revenue exceeded 400 *Kharwar* of rice to give two fat sheep to the local officials or 60 *dams* in cash in lieu thereof. Similarly Itqad Khan changed the age-old custom of realising land revenue in kind and instead demanded its payment in cash at an enhanced rate. The boatmen who used to pay from early times a special tax of 60 *dams* on every young person, 36 *dams* on a boy and 12 *dams* on an old man, were charged to pay 75 *dams* irrespective of the age of the person taxed. Other commodities did not escape taxation in one form or the other. For example, the country had fruits of various kinds in abundance and the fruit trade was brisk. But the owners of orchards were reduced to great distress, the Subhedar appointing his own men to pick the fruit and sell it at their own price. The owners thereupon started cutting down the fruit trees, preferring to keep the land uncultivated rather than yield its fruit to the unscrupulous governor.

Shah Jehan ultimately removed the cruel Subhedar and replaced him by a better man, Zaffar Khan Ahsan. The new governor, was a brave soldier, an accomplished diplomat and a distinguished poet and author. Several of his poetic compositions are in praise of the beauty of Kashmir. Possessed of polished manners and administrative ability, he quickly won the confidence of the people. He at once reported to the emperor their sad plight and recommended the immediate redress of their grievances. Shah Jehan forthwith ordered the abolition of cruel exactions which went a long way to improving the living conditions of the people. They were relieved of *begar* at the time of saffron harvest. The customary tax levied on each *Kharwar* of rice for fuel was also abolished. Villagers had not from then on to pay any perquisites to the persons in authority. Regarding the tax levied on the boatmen, the former practice which had been in vogue long before Itqad Khan's enhancement was to be followed. No Subhedar was to grab the fruit grown in private orchards. Any infringement of these orders, so went the royal proclamation, would bring down the wrath of God and of the emperor upon the wrong-doer.

Under Shah Jehan's orders, Zaffar Khan undertook the reduction of Baltistan to vassalage. The Mughal army which had to fight against odds — the snow and slush and the precipitous mountain passes — suffered serious losses in officers, men and supplies. But ultimately they carried the day. Baltistan was subjugated and Abdal Rai the ruler of the territory was forced to pay a heavy war indemnity amounting to a million

rupees.

Zaffar Khan laid out several gardens in Kashmir, the better known being "Gulshan" at Buta Kadal quarter of Srinagar and "Hassanabad" on the banks of the Dal canal. Kashmir is grateful to him for having improved the quality and taste of the cherry, plum, peach and grapes by introducing better grafts and saplings from Persia and Kabul.

It appears that the Shia-Sunni conflicts had not died down even with the advent of Mughal rule in Kashmir. For, there was a serious outbreak of rioting among the Sunnis and Shias during Zaffar Khan's governorship. To suppress it Zaffar Khan took strong measures and deported the leader of the Sunnis to Agra.

Shah Jehan visited Kashmir twice during Zaffar Khans's governorship — in 1634 and 1638. During the latter visit unprecedented floods devastated a large part of the city of Srinagar and several low-lying villages. The ripened crop was destroyed with the result that a severe famine took the beautiful land in its deadly grip. Thousands of people perished. Shah Jehan organised relief by sending grain from the Punjab and distributing it among the starving people.

Zaffar Khan was replaced by Shah Jehan's younger son Prince Murad. He remained in charge of Kashmir for only a year. Accustomed to leading a life of luxury, the prince neglected the administration of the land and indulged in the pleasures of life. He had earlier married a daughter of the Maliks of the southern district of the Valley, and taking undue advantage of their relation with the prince, they ravaged the land by loot and undue exactions from farmers. When the news of the sad condition of the people under Murad reached the emperor he recalled him to Agra and appointed Ali Mardan Khan in his place.

Ali Mardan Khan, originally an Iranian, is said to have come by a huge treasure when he was governor of Kandhar and not willing to surrender it to the Shah of Iran, came to India and sought service and protection at Shah Jehan's court.

To him goes the credit of laying out a number of gardens, the chief among which is that of Chashma Shahi near Srinagar. He built a network of roads in the Valley with long rows of poplars planted on either side. Nearly all the *serais* on the great Mughal road over the Pir Panjal pass were built by him. He was tolerant and appointed Pandit Mahadev as his chief adviser.

Another severe famine took a heavy toll of life in 1646 when

Tarbiat Khan was the governor. Thousands of people perished and thousands migrated to the Punjab. Shah Jehan despatched huge quantities of grain from Sialkot, Lahore and Gujarat. Yet another famine due to drought caught the unfortunate Valley in its grip during Shah Jehan's fourth and last visit in 1651. He cut short his visit spending only two months in the Valley. Leaving behind an efficient officer, Nawab Said Ullah Khan, to organise relief to the famine-stricken people, he personally supervised the despatch of grains from the Punjab to the distressed Valley. It was only during the time of Shah Jehan's last governor, Lashkar Khan (1657-59) that a measure of prosperity and happiness returned to the Valley.

Shah Jehan stands out as an eminent builder among the Mughal emperors. His monumental constructions like the Taj and Fort in Agra, The Red Fort in Delhi, etc, testify to his architectural taste. In Kashmir too, the emperor has left some specimens of his constructional work. The pavilion and the garden at Chashma Shahi, the upper portion of the Shalamar Bagh on the Dal, with its beautiful pavilion and scheme of fountains, remind one of the grandeur and refined taste of the architect-emperor of India. Pari Mahal, also called Kuntiloon, high up on a spur of the Zebwan hill on the Dal Lake, is presumed to have been built by Dara Shikoh to house his school of Sufism and an observatory. The calm and refreshing atmosphere about the place and the view of the lake and the Valley it commands, testify to the highly developed aesthetic sense of the Mughals.

Under the impetus of Mughal building activities the Kashmiri workmen developed remarkable skill in the building art and we find several workmen from Kashmir engaged on the construction of the Taj and laying out of Mughal gardens in the rest of India. Kashmiri architecture of the Mughal times was a synthesis of several art impulses — Hindu, Buddhist, Sesanian and Persian. The Jama Masjid in Srinagar which was destroyed by fire twice and rebuilt first by Jehangir and later by Aurangzeb is a typical example of Indo-Saracenic style of architecture.

Aurangzeb

Aurangzeb came to the throne of his father Shah Jehan in the year 1658. The war of succession in which Aurangzeb played a diplomatic and dominating role ended with the imprisonment by him of his father and defeat and death of his brothers. The mighty Mughal empire founded by Babar and consolidated by Akbar and his two successors, witnessed with the accession of Aurangzeb to the imperial throne, the beginning of

its end, result no doubt of the emperor's unwise policy of communal discrimination. This was in direct opposition to the policy of his illustrious predecessors who had brought all the communities nearer to one another by fostering the spirit of mutual amity and goodwill. Akbar respected the sentiments of his Hindu subjects and even shared with them some of the views on religion as an enlightened and emancipated monarch would do. No wonder the Hindus formed the bulwark of his empire. Aurangzeb was by nature a puritan and conservative in outlook. Times had changed and already a closer contact among the various religious communities was discernable. But Aurangzeb does not seem to have realised change and followed a policy of religious persecution.

Short of this, Aurangzeb possessed several sterling qualities of a good administrator. He carried out his duties conscientiously, was strictly just and honest. He was vigilant and put down corruption with a severe hand. He personally supervised the working of courts of justice. With regard to public money he was scrupulously honest. He led a pious, almost an ascetic's life with austere habits in food and dress.

Aurangzeb visited Kashmir only once, in 1665. He was accompanied by his daughter Roshanara. An interesting account of the emperor's journey to Kashmir has been given by Francois Bernier, a French physician in the employ of Danishmand Khan, a courtier.

The journey was rendered hazardous and troublesome by the precipitous mountain passes which lead to Kashmir. Several persons along with the animals they rode on were killed on the way and many were injured.

Aurangzeb considered a visit to Kashmir sheer luxury and the cause of great hardship to the poor Kashmiris who had to supply labour for the transport of baggage and supplies for the emperor and his large retinue. It was thus the first and the only visit of the emperor to the Valley. He utilised this opportunity in setting up a clean and efficient administration and personally inspected various departments at work.

During the 49 years of Aurangzeb reign, Kashmir was administered by no less than 14 governors sent from Delhi. Most of them were broad-minded and efficient. They dispensed justice and carried on the administration well. As usual they laid out gardens, built mosques and inns. Saif Khan (1664-67,1668-71), for instance, built the Safa Kadal, the seventh bridge in Srinagar and his adviser, Chaudhri Mahesh, laid out a vast garden with numerous terraces, fountains and cascades on the slopes of the hill at Ishabar. He settled several villages resulting in an increase in

agricultural produce. Among the Subhedars under whose rule the people were happy and peaceful may be mentioned Itmad Khan (1659-62), Hafizullah Khan (1686-90) and Fazal Khan (1698-1701). In times of unforeseen calamities like famines, floods and fires, they gave succour and relief to the suffering people.

There were, however, some exceptions. Iftikar Khan (1671-75) tyrannised over the Brahmins to such an extent that they approached Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, at Anandpur in the Punjab and solicited his personal intervention with the emperor. This ultimately led to the Guru's martyrdom, and the conversion of the Sikh Community into the fighting Khalsah under his son, Guru Gobind Singh. Similarly Muzaffar Khan (1690-92) and Abul Nassar Khan (1692-98), sons of Shaista Khan, let loose a reign of terror over the people. And when Aurangzeb came to know of their maladministration, he forthwith removed them from office and sent better and trusted people to replace them. Similar was the case with Ibrahim Khan (1678-86) who though in the beginning of his governorship succeeded in giving peaceful and clean administration to the province, could not effectively cope with a serious out break of rioting among the Sunnis and Shias.

In bold contrast to the inefficient and cruel administration of these governors was the rule of Fazal Khan (1698-1701). He abolished several vexatious taxes and removed the restrictions imposed on the people by Muzaffar Khan. Several monasteries were repaired and some new ones built.

The people in general were happy and peaceful. They made great progress in their chosen pursuits of life. Kashmiris were good poets and scholars, skilful artists and craftsmen. Shawl trade was brisk and formed an important item of the country's economy. Bernier gives a graphic description of the actual conditions of the people during Aurangzeb's time:

> "The Kachemirys are celebrated for wit, and considered much more intelligent than the Indians. In poetry and the sciences they are not inferior to the Persians. They are also very active and industrious. The workmanship and beauty of their *palkeys,* bedsteads, inkstands, boxes, spoons, and various other things are quite remarkable, and articles of their manufacture are in use in every part of the Indies. They perfectly understand the art of varnishing, and are eminently skilful in closely imitating the beautiful veins of a certain

wood, by inlaying with gold threads so delicately wrought that I never saw anything more elegant or perfect. But what may be considered peculiar to *Kachemire,* and the staple commodity, that which peculiarly promotes the trade of the country and fills it with wealth, is the prodigious quantity of shawls which they manufacture, and which gives occupation to the little children........."

Bahadur Shah

Aurangzeb' death in 1707 was the signal for a short and sharp contest for the throne among his three sons -Muazzam, Azam and Kam Baksh. His eldest surviving son Muazzam held the viceroyalty of the Punjab and north-west frontier province of Kabul. Learning of his father's death while stationed at Jamrud, he at once started for Agra. Having fore-seen a clash with his brothers he had been making secret preparations to meet the threat and was thus able to move down to Lahore with a strong army in a few weeks. Twentyfour miles north of Lahore he crowned himself emperor with the title of Bahadur Shah.

In the meantime Bahadur Shah's second son, Azim-ush-shan, who was the viceroy of Bengal and Bihar hearing of his grandfather's death moved to Agra with a huge treasure and a well-equipped army, and fearing a combined onslaught of Bahadur Shah and his son, the Comman-dant of the Agra Fort capitulated, thus the new emperor, Bahadur Shah, became the undisputed ruler of northern India.

Aurangzeb's second surviving son, Azam Shah, who was the vice-roy of the Deccan, hastened to the dead father's camp at Ahmednagar and ascended the throne there. At that time, however, the salaries of his soldiers were in arrears for three years and he could, therefore, make no effective move, till his son, Bidar Bakht, massed a strong force at Gwalior. When finally the combined armies of Azam and Bidar made a move, it appeared that Bahadur Shah would have to face a strong contestant to the throne. The two opposing armies clashed near Samog-arh on 15 June 1707. Bidar Bakht had some initial successes, but hampered by a confused medley of baggage, transport, cattle and followers, blinded by dust, dying of heat, thirst and a sandstorm blowing in their faces, his and his father's armies dispersed without any order in their ranks. They were slaughtered helplessly; Bidar Bakht himself was shot dead and his brother, Wallah Jah, mortally wounded. Azam was killed and most of his officers and the remnant of his army broke and fled.

Freed from his most formidable rival,Bahadur Shah lived in peace for a few years, till his youngest brother, Kam Baksh, raised a rebellion in the Deccan, crowning himself king at Bijapur. Some conquests were made by his agents but he lost the support of nobles and military commanders by his acts of insane cruelty. And when Bahahdur Shah moved with a strong force to the Deccan, most of the followers of Kam Baksh deserted, and joined him. On 16 January 1709 Kam Baksh's small force was overwhelmed by the imperial troops and the prince mortally wounded some four miles outside Hyderabad.

Communications with Delhi disrupted

Though Bahahdur Shah had now no rival to the throne from his own brothers, the empire was in the process of disintegration. His reign of over five years is marked by incessant rebellions, disturbances and invasions. The Rajputs on whom Aurangzeb had made an attack were inflicting deep and draining wounds on the decaying empire. Ajit Singh recovered his ancestral capital, Jodhpur, immediately after Aurangzeb's death, and Bahadur Shah had to send an expedition against him. Though the rebel did ultimately submit, yet in the succeeding period of disturbances, the Rajputs rose again in arms.

In the Punjab, the Sikh revolt assumed such a character that it threatened to repeat in the north the disruptive work of the Maratha rising of the South, and totally destroy Mughal peace. Banda Bairagi mustered a strong force of 40,000 armed Sikhs around him, sacked the town of Sadhaura (near Ambala) and gained his crowning victory by defeating and slaying Vazir Khan, the commandant of Sirhind, and plundering his camp. Bands of Sikhs crossed into the Jullundur Duab, and penetrated as far as Saharanpur occupying half the district. In the meantime, emboldened by the defeat of Vazir Khan, the Sikhs assembled at Amritsar, resolved to attack Lahore. They ravaged many villages and reached the suburbs of Lahore, though the city itself escaped. Desultory fighting continued, the Sikhs being predominant on the whole, and the north-western road from Delhi was effectively closed. The crisis drew Bahadur Shah to the scene and in the battle of Lohgarh the Sikhs lost heavily and Banda escaped with his life to the hills. Next year (1711) he came down to the plains and raised fresh disturbances. But he was again defeated and driven to the hills of Jammu. Desultory fighting with the Sikhs continued till the death of Bahadur Shah in 1712 when Banda taking advantage of the war of succession recovered Sadhaura and restored the fortifications of Lohgarh, so that all the work of Bahadur Shah was undone.

After the campaign against Banda, Bahadur Shah moved to Lahore. He was planning a visit to Kashmir, but with declining health he fell ill and passed away on 27 February 1712.

Bahadur Shah had a mild and calm temper, great dignity of behaviour and a generous disposition. On his accession, his own weak position coupled with advanced age, prevented him from asserting his will in any matter. He tried to please all but in the attempt succeeded in pleasing none.

Rule by Proxy

Owing to the disturbed conditions all over the country and particularly in north India the communications between Kashmir and the Imperial Court at Agra were often disrupted. It was not, therefore, possible for Bahadur Shah's first governor of Kashmir, Jaafar Khan to assume his duties for some time. The nobles who were assigned the governorship of distant Kashmir in the time of Bahadur Shah and later Mughal emperors, were reluctant to proceed to Kashmir at once, fearing their eclipse due to the rapidly changing fortunes at the Centre. Consequently there grew up a pernicious system of their appointing deputies to rule Kashmir on their behalf. The well-being of the province thus suffered terribly, as the deputies of the governor busied themselves in making the best of the time and squeezing the last penny out of the cultivator and the trader. The people had no means of seeking redress of their grievances, the nominal governor and the emperor, being throughout busy with their own affairs at Agra.

It is not, therefore, surprising that Jaafar Khan and his agent Abdullah Dehbedi indulged in the worst type of rule and made unjust and cruel exactions from the people. Jaafar Khan passed his days in drink and debauchery and entirely neglected the administration of the province. Ultimately the people, whose patience had reached the limit of endurance, rose in revolt and set fire to the residences of the deputy and other high officials. Fortunately for the people, Jaafar Khan who had contracted a serious illness passed away after an ignoble rule of a year and quarter.

Till the arrival of his successor in 1709, Arif Khan was installed as the acting governor. It was in his reign that Qazi Haider known as Qazi Khan a learned Kashmiri who rose to be the supreme judge at Aurangzeb's court died in Agra. His dead body was brought to Kashmir and was buried with honours in the Qazi's garden at Bachhpura near Srinagar.

Bahadur Shah nominated Ibrahim Khan to the governorship of Kashmir. Like his father, Ali Mardan Khan, Ibrahim had won laurels in the battles fought for the emperor at Ahmedabad, Kabul and Peshawar. Previously during the reign of Aurangzeb he had held with success the governorship of Kashmir three times — 1662-63,1678-86,1701-06 — and Bahadur shah in order to wipe off the opposition to the Mughal rule raised by the action of the ill-fated Jaafar Khan, considered Ibrahim as the best man for the job. But no sooner had Ibrahim reached Srinagar than he fell ill and passed away after a rule of only three months.

Again Arif Khan became the acting governor. Bahadur Shah assigned the governorship to Nawazish Khan, who had been Aurangzeb's last governor of Kashmir and whom the new emperor had recalled at his accession. But Nawazish Khan fearing a reversal of fortune at the imperial court did not proceed personally to Kashmir and allowed Arif Khan to act on his behalf. The latter conducted the administration honestly which won for him the title of Amanat Khan. During the brief period of one and a half year of Nawazish Khan's nominal governorship, Kahmir suffered terribly from floods. A conflagration destroyed several thousand houses in Srinagar.

Bahadur Shah's next Governor, Inayat Ullah (1711-12), also did not rule personally, but asked Arif Khan (now known as Amanat Khan) to carry on with the administration of the province. Inayat Ullah was a Kashmiri by birth and claimed Qazi Musa as his ancestor, He rose to high position under Aurangzeb and Bahadur Shah. His mother Mariam Bibi was a teacher of princess Zeb-un-nissa. Amanat Khan died after only nine months of the new governor's nominal rule and Inayat Ullah appointed his son-in-law, Musharaf Khan, as his agent to conduct the administration of Kashmir.

Jahandar Shah

On Bahadur Shah's death in 1712 his successor, Jahandar Shah, continued with Inayat Ullah and Musharaf Khan as the governor and agent of Kashmir respectively. In 1712, however, Inayat Ullah took over the governorship personally in order to subdue the Bomba leader Muzaffar Khan of the Jhelum valley below Baramula, who had raised a rebellion and occupied Drava and Karnah districts of Kashmir. While Inayat Ullah was engaged in the campaign, Jahandar Shah lost his throne and his successor, Farrukh-Siyar, recalled him to Agra.

Bahadur Shah's death and the war of succession among his four sons, weakened the empire further and the hold of the insurgent elements on north, south and central India became firmer. Consequently the emperors could not effectively administer a distant province like Kashmir, difficult of access and liable to attacks from ferocious hill tribes surrounding the Valley.

When, therefore, Jahandar Shah, the eldest son of Bahadur Shah, ascended the throne with the help and advice of his able minister Zulfikar Khan and after fighting a series of bloody battles, the governorship of Kashmir had lost its importance and charm for the aspiring courtiers, and Jahandar had to continue with the arrangement of his father during his brief rule of nine months.

Jahandar Shah's cruelty in disposing of his rivals and other princes of the royal household, coupled with his low moral character, cost him his life and throne. Farrukh-Siyar, the second son of his younger brother, Azim-ush-shan, with the help of the powerful nobles, the Sayyid brothers, led an army against him. He had to seek the shelter of the rival of the Sayyid brothers, Asaf-ud-daula. The latter behaved treacherously and with false promises of support, made him a prisoner and informed Farrukh-Siyar who ordered his execution.

With Farrukh-Siyar's accession, Inayat Ullah's governorship of Kashmir came to an end and so did his campaign against Muzaffar Khan the Bomba leader. The latter thus entrenched himself in the hilly regions to the west and north-west of the Valley and threw off his allegiance to the Mughal emperors.

Farrukh-Siyar

Farrukh-Siyar, who succeeded in capturing the throne with the help of the powerful Sayyids was not slow to recognise their services to him. He appointed Sayyid Abdullah as minister and Sayyid Hussain Ali as the first paymaster. But the new emperor had a host of personal fovourites whose leader Mir Jumla was ever influencing the emperor behind the back of the ministers and thus thwarting their work of day-to-day administration. Ultimately they succeeded in creating bad blood between the king and the Sayyid brothers. Another disrupting element was the rivalry between two groups of nobles — the Turanis who came from Central Asia and enjoyed high favour and influence with the Mughal emperors, and the Iranis whose home was Persia and Khorasan, and

who were singularly gifted especially in revenue and secretarial work. Though the earlier strong emperors kept these groups under control, their rivalry became the predominant characteristic of Indian history under the weak later Mughals and one of the causes of the downfall of their empire.

Farrukh-Siyar who was thoughtless, fickle and weak, devoid of constancy and fidelity, spent most of his time and energy in overthrowing the Sayyid brothers. He raised to power as a counterpoise to them an older noble, Inayat Ullah Kashmiri, who had been disgraced at the beginning of his reign by being dismissed from the governorship of Kashmir, but who now received the rank of 4,000 and was made imperial revenue minister. He tried to purge the administration of the abuses that had crept into it. But his reimposition of the poll-tax and attempts to resume some land grants of the nobles, raised a host of enemies in that corrupt court. The appointment of another Kashmiri officer, Muhammad Murad, as the superintendent of the imperial harem and raising him to the rank of 7,000 with the title of Itqad Khan, embittered further the relations between the emperor and his Sayyid ministers. The excessive favour shown to Murad alienated most of the former adherents of the emperor. This resulted in the central administration of the empire becoming more and more confused and weak, and the provinces falling into greater neglect than before.

Decay of the Empire

There were uprisings and rebellions all over the country. In the Punjab, Banda Bairagi was active with his headquarters at Sadhaura. It was after a long campaign that Farrukh-Siyar's governor of Lahore, Abdul Samad Khan, crushed Banda's opposition by defeating his forces. Banda was captured and finally executed. But no sooner had the trouble subsided in the Punjab than it shot up in another quarter. Jat peasantry of the region round Bharatpur were up in arms under Churaman and with their depredations made the roads unsafe. The emperor despatched a force with Raja Jai Singh in command. He invested Churaman's new fort of Thun hoping thus to secure his submission. The siege dragged on for twenty months after which Churaman opened negotiations over the head of Jai Singh, agreeing to pay a tribute of five million rupees. The siege was lifted and Churaman remained the master of the territories round Bharatpur.

As if these disturbances were not enough, there broke out open hostility between Farrukh-Siyar and the Sayyid brothers, who were

smarting under the indignities shown to them by the emperor in bestowing favours and riches on their rivals like Itqad Khan and Mir Jumla. The younger Sayyid, Hussain Ali, the viceroy of the Deccan, came to Delhi at the head of a huge army of 35,000 horse and foot to seat the alleged son of Muhammad Akbar (fourth son of Aurangzeb) on the throne. In the meantime Sayyid Abdullah, the minister, entered the palace and with the help of his personal adherents occupied the gates and other chambers of the fort palace. On the arrival of Hussain Ali, Farrukh-Siyar who had hid himself in the harem was dragged out, blinded and kept in prison for two months and then strangled to death (April, 1719). Rafi-ud-Darajat (a son of Rafi-ush-Shan) was now proclaimed emperor, but being a consumptive was deposed after only three months when the Sayyids installed his elder brother, Rafi-ud-daula, on the throne. Rafi-ud-daula was a very sickly youth and died after a few months rule. The Sayyids, who had been already looking out for his successor, crowned the son of Jahan Shah (the fourth son of Bahadur Shah), under the title of Muhammad Shah in September 1719.

In such uncertain times when the fortunes of the emperors and courtiers were changing rapidly at the Centre, the political and economic condition of a distant province like Kashmir can well be imagined than described. No wonder the governors who were appointed by the emperors were reluctant to proceed to Kashmir and instead appointed deputies to carry on the administration on their behalf.

Bomba and Gujjar revolt

Under Farrukh-Siyar Kashmir witnessed the administration of his two governors — Inayat Ullah Khan and Saadat Khan. The former had been the last governor during the reigns of Bahadur Shah and his successor Jahandar Shah, and on Farrukh-Siyar's accession to the throne in1713, was engaged in suppressing the revolt raised by the Bomba tribe of the Jhelum valley below Baramula under their leader, Muzaffar Khan. On the advice of his personal favourites and the Sayyid brothers, Farrukh-Siyar recalled Inayat Ullah from Kashmir and appointed Saadat Khan in his place.

Saadat Khan never visited the province personally but in the three short years of his tenure of office appointed no less than four deputies to rule over Kashmir on his behalf.

The first, Ali Muhammad Khan who took over early in 1713 spent his two years as the deputy-governor in putting down the revolt raised

by Muzaffar Khan. After Inayat Ullah's departure, the Bomba leader had extended his activities to the northern region of the valley also. On his death his son, Haibat Khan, continued his resistance to the Mughal forces but had ultimately to submit and surrender his son as a hostage. The Raja of Poonch, Abdul Razak Gujjar, who had raised a rebellion was also defeated and after paying a large sum in tribute was restored to his principality. All these campaigns strained the resources of the governor. Ali Muhammad Khan, to meet the demands of the troops, resorted to heavy taxation of the people. This was brought to the notice of Saadat Khan who recalled him and appointed Azam Khan in his place. The latter's rule of 11 months gave peace to the Valley. Ali Muhammad Khan, who had by now grown wiser was reappointed for a year after which Saadat Khan sent a fresh deputy in Ehtram Khan who was destined to occupy the chair of his office for only a few days, the governor himself being replaced by orders of the emperor by Inayat Ullah Khan, who had regained the emperor's confidence and favour.

This time Inayat Ullah did not leave the capital of the emperors and placed Mir Ahmad Khan to deputise for him in Kashmir. The latter soon won the confidence of the people by a just and benevolent administration. During the subsequent reigns of emperors Rafi-ud-Darajat and Rafi-ud-Daulah and the first few months of Muhammad Shah, Inayat Ullah continued to be the nominal governor with Mir Ahmad Khan as his deputy.

Religious persecution

In common with the troubled state of affairs all over the Mughal empire, Kashmir also witnessed the outbreak of the worst kind of religious fanaticism. In 1720 when the affairs at the Mughal headquarters were still in a fluid condition, Mullah Abdul Nabi alias Muhta Khan who was the Sheikh-ul-Islam of Kashmir, in order to extend his authority, gave instructions to the deputy-governor, Mir Ahmad Khan, for certain insensate destructive measures against the Hindus. But the goodnatured deputy did not oblige him. Muhta Khan then instigated his followers to plunder and set fire to the houses of the Hindus, and assumed the duties of the governor under the title of Dindar Khan. With his limited resources Mir Ahmad Khan was unable to assert his authority and applied to his master Inayat Ullah to despatch a strong detachment of soldiers from Delhi. The governor replaced Mir Ahmad and sent Momin Khan to Kashmir at the head of a small force of Mughal soldiers. He took some months to arrive and in the meantime Muhta Khan was assassinated by

one Sayyid Azhar Khan (whose office of tax collector was usurped by him) in a Shia's house with the result that the Shia community shared the same fate as Hindus at the hands of Muhta Khan's followers. Momin Khan like his predecessor finding it difficult to control the situation confirmed Muhta Khan's son, Mulla Sharaf-ud-din, as his successor to the office of Sheikh-ul-Islam, in order to gain time to organise his government and army. Sharaf-ud-din, however, followed the same policy of persecution of the Hindus and Shias as his father. There was lawlessness and chaos in the land. Finally the emperor Muhammad Shah, dismissed Inayat Ullah from the governorship of Kashmir, appointing in his place Abdul Samad Khan Saif-ud-Daula. Taking with him a large force from Lahore Abdul Samad Khan entered Kashmir in 1722 and immediately put Sharaf-ud-din to death. In one excursion from Naid Kadal to Khwaja Yarbal in Srinagar, a distance of two miles, he hanged fifty insurgents. He removed all restrictions on Hindus who had been forbidden to wear turbans, to ride or to put on the caste-mark on their foreheads. There was justice again in the land and the Kashmiri bard sang:

Haka av Samad phutrun zin
Na rud kuni Sharaf no rud kuni Din
Samad (horse) came swiftly. There remained
Neither Sharaf (cardinalship) nor Din (bigotry) anywhere.

Muhammad Shah.

But this was for only a brief period. During the 29 years of emperor Muhammad Shah's reign, Kashmir became a hotbed of intrigue among imperial, provincial and local dignatories, which resulted in incessant turmoil and bloodshed. Added to local troubles were the raids by the hill tribes of Bombas, Khakhas and Gujjars of Jhelum Valley, Poonch and Hazara. The government of the Subhedars and their deputies had not enough armed forces and finances to punish the rebels and raiders and during the later years of the emperor's rule they themselves became parties to the scramble for power.

All this resulted from the rapid liquidation of the Mughal empire that was taking place during Muhammad Shah's reign. The Jats round Bharatpur, the Marathas in Malwa, Gujarat and Deccan, the Sikhs in the Punjab and the Rajputs in Rajasthan were delivering massive blows on the edifice so laboriously built up by Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jehan. Nizam-ul-Mulk was practically independent in the Deccan. Bundelkhand

and Bhagelkhand repudiated the authority of the emperor and there were risings in Allahabad, Malwa, and other places illustrative of both the decay of respect for the imperial government and the ineptitude of the imperial officials.

The final blow was dealt by Nadir Shah who after capturing the throne of Persia in 1736, advanced on Ghazni two years later and thence led an armed invasion of India in 1739. Muhammad Shah was too weak to put up any effective resistance and after a sharp and decisive battle at Sonepat, Nadir entered Delhi in triumph on 18 March, 1739. Two days later he ordered a general massacre of its inhabitants and it was only when Muhammad Shah begged him the life of the remaining population that he stopped the terrific carnage.

With an enormous booty in gold, Jewellery, horses and elephants Nadir Shah returned to Persia, leaving behind the bleeding body of the Mughal empire of Hindustan with the last breath on its dying lips. Muhammad Shah lived for six years more to witness the final liquidation of the empire.

Abul Barkat Khan

Kashmir had its share of lawlessness and chaos during Muhammad Shah's reign. No less than 12 governors were appointed to rule over Kashmir in his regime. They in turn appointed a host of deputies who without any material aid from the Centre, could retain their office on sufference of the unruly tribes of Bombas, Khakhas, Kishtwaris and Gujjars, as well as the followers of rival nobles and feudatory lords.

The confusing history of the time, however, reveals the personality of a clever deputy Subhedar, Abul Barkat Khan, who first appears on the scene as the deputy of Abdul Samad Khan, the strong governor who restored peace by suppressing the revolt of Sharaf-ud-din. Abdul Barkat could not, however, pull on well with the joint deputy and Abdul Samad removed both, appointing Najib Khan as his deputy (1722 AD). Three years later during which Kashmir had one of the worst famines, Abul Barkat was again appointed as deputy by the new governor, Aqidat Khan. He was removed from office after an inefficient rule of two years. But his successor Aghar Khan's misrule gave him an opportunity to lead a successful revolt by the tyrannised Kashmiris who drove Aghar Khan out of the Valley. The emperor appointed a fresh governor Amir Khan who maintained Abul Barkat as his deputy. After a rule of two years more he was dismissed by Amir Khan, being

succeeded by an inefficient and foolish person, Ehtram Khan. Again he raised a revolt and in a personal combat defeated the new deputy who ran for his life to the plains of India. The governor had no choice but to reappoint Abul Barkat as his deputy.

So for the fourth term (1730-35) Abul Barkat continued to rule Kashmir. It was during this time that Haibat Khan, the Bomba leader, again raised a revolt in the Jhelum valley and entering the Kamraj division indulged in loot and arson. Abul Barkat Khan, who had very few soldiers at his command, failed to suppress the revolt and by offering bribes managed to send away Haibat and his raiders back to their hilly home.

In 1735 emperor Muhammad Shah made a change in the governorship of Kashmir by bestowing it on Dil Dilir Khan who, being unable to go to the province personally, continued with Abul Barkat's deputy governorship. During these two years (1736-38) of his rule there occurred a devastating flood and a severe earthquake resulting in wholesale destruction of crops and houses and fearful loss of life. To add to the miseries of the unfortunate people Haibat Khan again raided the northern district of the Valley. But now Abul Barkat despatched a strong force under a powerful Kashmiri noble — Mir Jaffar Kanth — who not only defeated Haibat but brought the Bomba tribe under complete subjugation.

This was the beginning of the rivalry between Abul Barkat and Mir Jaffar Kanth. Soon there broke out open hostility between their followers and for months Srinagar was turned into a battlefield of the contending leaders. Finally Kanth sought and obtained aid from the Gujjars of Poonch and in a bloody battle defeated Abul Barkat who to save his life had to flee to the Punjab.

When the news of the discomfiture of his deputy reached Dil Dilir Khan, he despatched another Mughal Sirdar, Jalil -ud-din Khan at the head of a strong force to Kashmir. But by then the Valley had fallen a prey to utter lawlessness for which the depredations of Jaffar Kanth were mainly responsible. The new deputy finding it impossible to restore peace resigned his job and the emperor appointed another noble, Fakhr-ul-Daulah to the governorship of Kashmir.

Both the new governor and his deputy failed to suppress the unruly elements and so after a brief term of nine months, the post was offered to Inayat Ullah II, the son of Inayat Ullah Kashmiri who had during the reigns of previous emperors, held it several times with distinction.

Inayat Ullah's choice of his deputy was unfortunate. He was a weakling and when in 1739 Nadir Shah invaded India, the previous governor Fakhr-ul-daulah won him over to his side and getting for himself a royal *firman* from Nadir entered Kashmir as the viceroy of the invader. In fact he struck coins and read the *Khutba* in the name of Nadir Shah. But the people of Kashmir refused to acknowledge the new emperor and on Nadir's return to Persia rose in revolt driving Fakhr-ul-daulah out of Kashmir. Abul Barkat appeared again on the scene and securing the deputy governorship from Inayat Ullah set up his head-quarters in Srinagar.

Fall of Abul Barkat

Abul Barkat now became more ambitious. Realizing that Nadir Shah's invasion had practically destroyed the power of the emperor, he quickly consolidated his position in Kashmir and rose against his master, Inayat Ullah Khan who was twice defeated and forced to hide himself in the city. Abul Barkat declared his independence. Soon, however, Inayat Ullah and his son mustered an army and defeated Abul Barkat. The latter took shelter with the Gujjar ruler of Poonch. Leading a strong force of Gujjars he again attacked Inayat Ullah who was completely defeated and ran for his life to Raja Mahmood Khan, the leader of the Bomba tribe.

The Bombas seized this opportunity and again entered the Valley where they indulged in looting and killing of the people. Ultimately Abul Barkat's men caught hold of Inayat Ullah and treacherously murdered him (1741 AD).

On Inayat's death the emperor appointed another nominal governor, this time Asad Yar Khan , but he was unable to dislodge Abul Barkat, who continued to rule as an independent king. But soon be had trouble with his Gujjar supporters whom he succeeded in driving out with the help of his local followers. Trouble broke out from another quarter. One of his trusted lieutenants raised a revolt and with the help of the Shias attacked Srinagar. Abul Barkat who was ailing from a fell disease instead of crushing the rebels, vented his wrath on the poor Shia community. The rebel leader, Bir Ullah Beg, won over most of the troops of Abul Barkat and thus succeeded in controlling the whole Valley. Abul Barkat was arrested and thrown into prison. This was a signal for general lawlessness. The hill tribes came down upon the helpless Kashmiris and for four months anarchy and chaos ruled supreme.

Ultimately the emperor appointed another governor, Abul Mansur

Safdar Jung (1745-48), who sent Nisar Khan as his deputy with a strong contingent of Mughal forces. The latter acted diplomatically and securing Abul Barkat's release sent him to Delhi to the court of the emperor. He won over the rebel Bir Ullah and appointed him to a responsible post. Within a short period of six months normal conditions were restored in the war-torn land of Kashmir.

Abul Barkat Khan was destined to live only for a few months more. A versatile man, fond of literature and poetry, he was a clever politician and an army leader. For over 25 years he dominated the political scene in Kashmir, at a time when the fortunes of both the Mughal empire and Kashmir stood at cross-roads. Ambitious by nature, he did not hesitate to adopt mean intrigue to advance his interests, and overlooked the lapses of his subordinates so long as they proved useful to him. But though he maintained a semblance of government during a period of uncertainty and alarm, his intrigues and frequent campaigns were a source of misery and penury to the harassed people.

The great famine

It appears that the Fates were dead-set against the people of Kashmir at this period, as during 1746-47 there occurred a flood which washed off the ripened crops. The loss was all the more unfortunate because the reserve food stocks had been exhausted during the preceding years of political upheavals and chaotic administration. The result was a severe famine which wiped off more than three fourths of the population of the Valley through death, emigration and disease. Dead bodies lay strewn on the ground, unburied and uncremated, to be eaten by vultures. It was a horrible sight to find the famished survivors crawling their way to India and dying like flies due to exhaustion and hunger. Most of the Kashmiris who were fortunate to reach the plains settled permanently there. Some of them went to Delhi and later made a mark both at the Imperial court and with its successors, the British.

Rise of Abdali

And while the black famine was taking its cruel toll of life in the Valley, an event destined to have far reaching consequences for its inhabitants was taking place in distant Persia. On 2 June 1747, Nadir Shah was assassinated and his empire dissolved. Among his chief commanders was Ahmad Shah Abdali, an Afghan who had risen to high rank in Nadir's service. When Nadir was assassinated Abdali returned to his own country and with the help of his tribe and a force of Qizilbash

horse established himself at Herat, captured Kandahar and expelled from Kabul Nadir Shah's governor of that province. Having thus reduced to obedience the whole of Afghanistan proper, he assumed the royal title.

Ahmad Shah Abdali next crossed the Indus with 30,000 horse and invaded the Punjab and after capturing Lahore pushed on to Delhi. His advance was, however, halted at Sirhind by the army of the Mughal emperor led by the prince Ahmad Shah. A bloody battle ensued, resulting in Abdali's defeat and retreat towards Afghanistan.

Ahmad Shah

The victorious prince while on his way back to Delhi heard of his father's death at Panipat and on 29 April 1748 he was crowned as the emperor of Hindustan.

But it was an empire only in name. India south of the Narmada and west of the Wainganga and the Godavari was ruled by a prince independent in all but name. The three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa were ruled by another independent prince. West of Bengal lay the viceroyalty of Oudh virtually independent under a hereditary ruler and destined to absorb the provinces of Allahabad and Rohilkhand. Malwa formed a part of the dominions of the rising power of Marathas and the same may be said of the richer province of Gujarat. Rajputana stood sullenly aloof from the empire and the Punjab, Multan and Sind lay at the feet of the new Afghan King, Ahmad Shah Abdali. All that remained to Delhi were the northern half of the Gangetic Duab and a strip of territory which only at one point attained the width of a hundred miles. Within this limited area the emperor of India exercised such authority as his ministers were pleased to leave in his hands. The great nobles were entirely selfish, devoid of patriotism and honour and interested only in dividing among themselves the remnant of the dominions of the Great Mughal.

Anarchy in Kashmir

Devoid of armed might, ill-supplied with troops and ammunitions, the Subhedar of Kashmir, Abul Mansur Safdar Jung, could hardly maintain authority in the province, and his deputy, Afrasiyab Khan, was hard put to it to either render assistance to the famine-stricken people or keep the turbulent nobles under check. The latter opened secret negotiations with Ahmad Shah Abdali and promised all aid to him in a campaign against the nominal Mughal ruler. Accordingly Ahmad Shah sent his

governor of Peshawar, Jahan Khan Bamzai, with a letter for the Mughal governor of Kashmir, requesting permission to visit the Valley of whose beauty he had heard so much. But Abdali never visited Kashmir, his object in sending this mission being only to gain information on the defences of the province.

In 1748 when emperor Muhammad Shah was still alive, Abdali sent a force of Afghans under Asmat Ullah Khan to occupy Kashmir, but though he succeeded in penetrating as far as Srinagar, he could not withstand the onslaught of the forces which Afrasiyab Khan was able to muster. Asmat Ullah was killed and his troops were scattered and annihilated.

With the accession of Ahmad Shah to the throne of Delhi, events in Kashmir took a turn for the worse. There were incessant feuds among the followers of the nobles and the Mughal governors. Afrasiyab Khan continued to hold the chair of deputy governor for nearly five years more (1748-53) when he was killed by poison by an employee who had been purchased by Abdali's governor of Peshawar to commit the heinous act. Complete anarchy followed Afrasiyab's death. He was succeeded by his minor son born of his Kashmiri wife. Malik Hassan Irani, the child's guardian who wanted to usurp all power, got him assassinated after only two months. But Hassan Irani was himself dismissed soon after when the emperor Ahmad Shah appointed a new governor — Alaquli Khan.

But in the meantime political conditions in the Punjab and north western provinces had altered materially. Ahmad Shah Abdali during his third invasion of India in 1751, demanded the cession of the Punjab and Multan. The Mughal governor of the Punjab withstood the invader for four months but had ultimately to yield to the Afghan forces of Abdali. Before the invaders could reach Delhi the pusillanimous emperor Ahmad Shah had purchased safety by a disgraceful treaty which ceded the Punjab and Multan to Afghanistan.

Afghan invasion and end of Mughal rule

So when Alaquli Khan took over the governorship of Kashmir, he thought it prudent to appoint a Kashmiri, Mir Muqim Kanth, as his deputy. Mir Muqim, finding the treasury empty, adopted measures to effect economy in expenditure, and in this process disbanded a number of troops and cut the salaries of the rest. This created disaffection in the army and seizing the opportunity Abul Qasim Khan the son of Abul Barkat Khan who though a pauper was yet ambitious, won over the armed

forces to his side and driving away Mir Muqim Kanth declared himself the independent ruler of Kashmir. Qasim indulged in insensate cruelty and there was widespread distress in the land.

While Ahmad Shah Abdali after his victorious campaign was back in Lahore, Mir Muqim Kanth and Khwaja Zahir Didamari, the two influential leaders of Kashmir, distressed at the depredations of Qasim, took an impolitic step in inducing Abdali to invade Kashmir and to bring it under his rule. Abdali gladly accepted the invitation and in 1753 sent a strong force of Afghans under Abdullah Khan Ishk Aqasi. Abul Qasim mustered his army at Shopyan, at the foot of the Pir Panjal pass, and dealt heavy blows on the invader. Fighting continued for 15 days, both the sides losing heavily in men and arms. Ultimately Ishk Aqasi won over Abul Qasim's commander, Gul Khan Khaibri, and losing heart Qasim left the field but was arrested and taken to Kabul. Ishk Aqasi entered Srinagar in triumph and planted the Afghan standard on the ramparts of Akbar's fort at Nagar Nagar and thus brought to end the rule of the Mughal emperors in Kashmir.

13

AFGHAN RULE IN KASHMIR

The Mountainous Region on the north-west of the Indian sub-continent contains most of the lowest depressions in the vast Himalayan chain dividing it from the rest of Asia. Aptly called "The Corridor" it has witnessed the passage of numerous peoples — the Aryans, Greeks, Scythians, Turks, Tartars, Mughals and Afghans, to mention only a few — who migrated to the fertile plains of Hindustan from the inhospitable regions of the north. It has been the storm-gap through which passed the ebb and flow of the eternal struggle between the nomadic people of the Central Asian uplands and the settled, opulent and cultured inhabitants of the Plains.

"The Corridor"

Afghanistan as it is now known to the world, was embraced in the Achaemenian Satrapies in the time of Darius Hystaspes 500 BC. It was through this country (known then as Pasht or Pakht) that Alexander's victorious armies passed into northern India. With the death of Alexander, the break-up of his empire among his generals took place. Bactria became a kingdom under Satrap Philip; Kabul, Ghazni and perhaps Kandahar, another under Starsanor and Sibertius. The quarrelling and fighting among these Strapies were prolonged and it was not for several years that Seleukos emerged as emperor of the country from the Euphrates to the Oxus and Indus. Seleukos is said to have given to Chandragupta, in consequence of a marriage contract, some part of the country west of the Indus, occupied by an Indian population. Some sixty years later an independent Greek dynasty was established in Bactria. In course of time their power extended over to the Kabul Basin and probably over whole of Afghanistan. But the mass of the people were evidently Hindu or Aryan who, after the rise of Asoka, became Buddhist. These varied Hellenic kings seemed to have been driven forth by the invading

Scythian hordes towards India where they established Hellenic kingdoms on the Indus.

It was during the time of Kaniska that Afghanistan came under the political domination of the Kusans and Buddhism flourished there. There are still numerous traces of the once Buddhistic population in this region. A free commercial, political and cultural intercourse with the Indian and Central Asian people during this period resulted in a prosperous and contented people inhabiting this otherwise inhospitable territory. Various barbaric dynasties succeeded one another after the Kusans and there was constant struggle going on for the acquisition of absolute mastery over the land. In the time of Heun Tsiang (630-45 AD) there were both Indian and Turk princes in the Kabul valley and in the succeeding centuries both these races seem to have predominated in succession. Throughout these centuries there existed political and cultural ties between Kashmir and Afghanistan so much so that Kalhana lays the opening scenes of his *Rajatarangini* in the latter country.

It was not till the end of the tenth century that a Hindu prince ceased to reign in Kabul, when it fell into the hands of the Turk; Subaktigin, who had established his capital at Ghazni. There, too, reigned his famous son Mahmud and a series of descendants till the middle of the 12th century. The Ghazni dynasty was succeeded by that of Alau-ud-din of Ghor whose nephew Shihab-ud-din Muhammad repeatedly invaded India.

Afghanistan and its adjacent countries of the north and south were included in Timur's conquests and Kabul at least remained in the possession of one of his descendants till 1501, only three years before it fell into the hands of another and more illustrious one, Sultan Babar. From the time of his conquest of Hindustan as a result of the first battle of Panipat in 1562, Kabul and Kandahar remained a part of the vast Mughal empire.

The relation between Afghanistan and Kashmir remained to some extent curtailed from the attempted invasion of the Valley by Mahmud in 1015 to its annexation by Akbar in 1586 when it was included in the Subha of Kabul. During the Mughal rule there was close contact and commercial and political intercourse between the two sub-divisions of the Subha, and Kashmiris again became familiar with their old neighbours.

But during the long interval of five centuries and more Afghanistan had undergone a metamorphosis in the composition of its population mostly due to the rise of the Mongols and Turks under Genghis Khan and

Timur. No longer were there the old talented artists and craftsmen, no longer were there the cultured, peace-loving and prosperous people. Instead, their place had been taken up by a rough but hardy people of the Turkish and Mongol descent, divided into numerous clans, each fiercer than the other. When not engaged in a war with their neighbours, their propensities to adventure often found vent in clan warfare and personal vendetta, so much so that to them the cutting of a "human head was no more cruel than plucking a flower."

Foundation of Afghanistan

In the first quarter of the 18th century AD, the power and authority of the Safavi dynasty of Persia touched a low level, and fell from the grasp of a weak and worthless prince into the hands of a band of quarrelsome nobles. But soon a deliverer appeared in the person of Nadir Quli, a Turk who in 1729 expelled the Afghans from Isfahan and Fars and extended the Persian monarchy to its ancient limits. In 1736 he ascended the throne of Persia as Nadir Shah.

Nadir Shah who engulfed the Afghans in his hurricane campaigns against the people of India dealt a deadly blow to the decadent Mughal empire. In order to augment his force he had, however, to depend upon the goodwill of the Afghans whom he enlisted in ever larger numbers in his army. Among a band of Afghan nobles whom he patronised was a young soldier, Ahmad Khan, of the Sadozai family of the Abdali clan, who took service under Nadir. He so distinguished himself by his pluck and dash and his organising capacity, that he rose to the command of the Abdali contingent, 6,000 strong and became the right-hand man of his Chief. At the time of the assassination of Nadir(1747),Ahmad Khan, then a young man of 24, had under his control 10,000, effective horse, and what was even more valuable, the treasure of Nadir Shah, which included the Koh-i-nur. With this treasure and his own personality and powers he was chosen by the Afghan chiefs at Kandahar to be their leader and assumed kingly authority over the eastern part of Nadir's empire, with the style of Duri-Durran, "Pearl of the Age", after which his clan came to be known as Durrani. With Ahmad Shah, Afghanistan as such first took its place among the kingdoms of the world.

Abdali's Campaigns

After giving a semblance of orderly government to his subjects, Ahmad Shah undertook the invasion of India. In 1747 he came to Lahore and thus into the heart of the falling Mughal empire. He speedily

conquered Lahore and then hastened towards Delhi. The imperial troops under the command of Prince Ahmad halted his advance near Sirhind and unable to break their lines, Ahmad Shah Abdali retreated to Afghanistan. He repeated his invasion in 1749 but did not advance beyond Lahore, where the governor bought him off by the cession of the revenue of four sub-districts. Retreating to his fastnesses with a rich booty and leaving the administration of his Indian territories in the hands of his lieutenants, Ahamd Shah began to concentrate on new ventures in the direction of Herat, Meshed and Nishapur. In 1751 he again entered India and after a sharp struggle with Muin-ul-Mulk, the governor of the Punjab, Abdali over ran the province and proceeded to Delhi. But before he could reach the imperial capital the cowardly emperor Ahmad had purchased safety by a disgraceful treaty which ceded the Punjab and Multan to Afghanistan.

While back at Lahore, he received an invitation from the leaders of Kashmir to rid the kingdom of cruel governors of the decadent Mughal emperors, and bring it directly under his rule. He sent a strong force of Afghans under his lieutenant, Ishk Aqasi on this mission who after overcoming stiff resistance put up by the Mughal forces in Kashmir, annexed the territory to the expanding kingdom of Abdali.

On 2 June 1754, the Mughal emperor Ahmad Shah was deposed and prince Aziz-ud-din, the eldest surviving son of Jahandar Shah, was raised to the throne under the title of Alamgir II. His chief minister Ghazi-ud-din planned to recover the Punjab for the emperor. Abdali's governor of the province, Muin-ul-Mulk, who died in 1753 had been succeeded by his widow Mughlani Begum who had made herself feared. But she was not fitted to govern a large and impoverished province. Ghazi-ud-din led a strong army against her had after arresting her conferred the government of the Punjab on his nominee.

Ahmad Shah Abdali marched on Lahore and after capturing it without firing a single shot, advanced by forced marches on Delhi which he entered on 28 January 1757. He stayed in the city for nearly a month, during which time he sacked it and pillaged the citizens. Returning homewards, he again left the feeble emperor on his ancestral throne putting his 11 year old son, Timur Mirza, in charge of the Punjab.

But meanwhile the Marathas who constituted the most powerful force in India were invited by Adina Beg the governor of Jullundur to occupy the Punjab, promising them large sums of money. Accordingly the Marathas appeared on the scene in 1758, and driving Timur across the

Indus, occupied Lahore. After this easy conquest, Raghunath Rao, the brother of the Peswa and leader of the Maratha forces in the Punjab, appointed Adina Beg governor and himself retired to the Deccan. Shortly after Adina Beg died and a Maratha chief, Sabaji Bhonsle, was nominated to be his successor. By their occupation of the Punjab, the Marathas challenged the powerful Afghan monarch who, however, could not immediately answer it, being engaged in quelling a rebellion raised by the Afghan chief of Baluchistan.

Ahmad Shah Abdali, after forcing the rebellious chief to submission, attacked the Marathas in 1759 compelling them to evacuate Lahore which he occupied. Driving the main body of the Marathas in front of him, Ahmad Shah defeated them some ten miles north of Delhi. Similarly he defeated another Maratha force under Mulhar Rao Holkar and the power of the Marathas was thus temporarily shattered in Northern India.

The Peswa upon hearing of these disasters, prepared a great army under the command of Sadasiv Rao. Marching north, its numbers were swollen by the forces of other Hindu princes and by thousands of irregulars of every sort.

Ahmad Shah Abdali had encamped during the rains of 1760 some thirty miles to the north of Delhi . Here he was joined by the redoubtable forces of the Rohila chief, Shuja-ud-daula.

Third Battle of Panipat

So on 14 January, 1761 the two armies clashed at the battlefield of Panipat. For the first time the Marathas, contrary to their fighting tactics, met the enemy in an open field face to face. After an opening attack of the Maratha artillery, the Afghans made a counter-attack with their infantry. Their charge was, however, nullified by the fierce onslaught of the Maratha cavalry. The battle continued with varying fortunes till the afternoon when Viswa Rao, the Peswa's son and Sadasiv Rao were both killed. The Marathas lost all hope and retreated in disorder. The pursuit by moonlight cost tens of thousands of lives and the Maratha defeat was complete.

But though this great victory enhanced the prestige of Abdali, it did not yield him any material or political gain. His soldiers insisted for returning to their homes. Accordingly after extracting as much money as possible at Delhi, Ahmad Shah Abdali marched back to the highlands of Afghanistan.

But he was not left there in peace for long. Another power was

taking its birth and making itself felt in the Punjab — that of the Sikhs. Since their rising power demanded his serious attention, Abdali came down to the Punjab in 1762 and inflicted a heavy defeat on them. Ahmad stayed in Lahore for a year, trying to establish peace in Northern India. It was during this stay that he recovered Kashmir which had rebelled under Raja Sukh Jiwan, one of his governors of the province.

Upon his departure from the Punjab, the Sikh power recovered rapidly and Abdali reappeared in Lahore in 1764. He had, however, to hasten back to Afghanistan to quell a civil war. No sooner did he leave the city than the Sikhs captured it again and wiped off all the vestiges of Afghan rule.

By 1767 Ahmad Shah Abdali was convinced that it was not possible for him to establish his authority in the Punjab any longer. Finally he and his forces were driven out of the Punjab by the turbulent Sikhs. In 1767, in his seventh and last expedition 12,000 of his soldiers suddenly decamped and marched back to Kabul, Ahmad being compelled to follow them. With much difficulty and the loss of his baggage he reached the Indus, pursued by the Sikhs who were thus left in undisturbed possession of the Punjab. Ahmad Shah died in 1773, and his son Timur, more peaceably inclined by nature, never seems to have seriously followed a policy of invasion during the 20 years of his reign.

Such was the background against which the sad and bloody drama of the ruthless suppression of the culture and moral values of the oppressed Kashmiris was being enacted in the secluded Valley. The confusion prevailing in northern India, the pre-occupations of Abdali and the eclipse of the Mughal empire encouraged most of the governors and their deputies to indulge in terrorising and looting the people and often to throwing off their allegiance to the Afghan kings of Kabul. This was naturally followed by the despatch of punitive expeditions against them. The fratricidal wars among the sons of Timur Mirza following his death worsened the chaotic conditions prevailing in Kashmir since the advent in 1753 of the Afghans, to the consideration of whose rule we will now revert.

Ahmad Shah Abdali

The circumstances leading to the conquest of Kashmir by the Afghans have already been mentioned. (see pp.427-30).

For 67 years their rule lasted in Kashmir and reduced the Valley to

the lowest depths of penury, degradation and slavery. While inviting the Afghans to take over the administration of the Valley, the Kashmiri nobles had mistaken them for a branch of the civilized and humane Mughal emperors of India. They had hoped that after the break-up of the Central Mughal power, Ahmad Shah Abdali and his successors would give them a stable administration. Little did they imagine that all the beauty and nobility for which Kashmir and its people were famous would be wiped off under their rule. Sorrowfully the poet voices these feelings in the following telling lines:

Pursidam az kharabiye gulshan zi baghban
Afghan kashid guft ki Afghan kharab kard.

I enquired of the gardener the cause of the destruction of the garden,

Drawing a deep sigh he replied,"It is the Afghans who did it".

Rude was the shock that the Kashmiris got when they witnessed the first acts of barbarity at the hands of their new masters. Abdullah Khan Ishk Aqasi let loose a reign of terror as soon as he entered the Valley. Accustomed to looting and murdering the subjected people, his soldiers set themselves to amassing riches by the foulest means possible. The Well-to-do merchants and noblemen of all communities were assembled together in the palace and ordered to surrender all their wealth on pain of death. Their houses were ransacked, denuded of all that was of any value therein. Those who had the audacity to complain or to resist were quickly despatched with the sword and in many cases their families suffered the same fate. Red-hot iron bars were applied to the body of a rich Muslim nobleman, Jalil by name. Another, Qazi Khan, had to pay an enormous fine of a lakh of rupees, but suspecting that he had not surrendered his all, his son was put to such physical torture that he ended his life by drowning himself in the river. Finding themselves unable to carry on their trade, more than 80 Hindustani merchants who had established their houses of business in Kashmir left for their homeland. The whole economy of the Valley was utterly ruined. Peasants would not till their land for fear of heavy exactions . People could not walk through the streets without fear of being robbed of even their scanty clothing by the soldiery; the shawl weavers left their looms unattended; the grocers would not open their shops. Life became one long night of gloom and misery. Ultimately finding that nothing more could be extracted from the people, Abdullah Khan Ishk Aqasi left the Valley after a misrule of five months, carrying with him a huge sum of more than a crore of rupees. He left the administration of the Valley in the hands of Abdullah Khan

Kabuli and appointed a Khatri, Sukh Jiwan Mal as his chief adviser.

Raja Sukh Jiwan

The disillusioned and depressed Kashmiris would not, however, look with equanimity on the continuance of the tyrannical Afghan rule. One of the influential nobles, Abdul Hassan Bandey, entered into a conspiracy with the Afghan Sirdar's adviser, Sukh Jiwan Mal, and after a few months' rule, the Sirdar and his son were asassinated. Sukh Jiwan Mal, thereupon, became the virtual ruler of the land.

The people of Kashmir breathed a sigh of relief. They flocked to enrol themselves in the army of Sukh Jiwan who taking advantage of popular hatred against the Afghans, and pre-occupations of Ahmad Shah in the Punjab and Persia, declared his independence (1754). Driven to narrow straits, the clever Ahmad Shah bore this treachery on the part of his vassal and bided his time. To dispel all suspicion he confirmed Sukh Jiwan as his viceroy of Kashmir and deputed an Afghan noble, Khwaja Kijak, to work under him as his deputy.

The campaigns of Ahmad Shah in India and the retaliatory uprisings of the Marathas and Sikhs emptied his treasury. A huge sum of money to the tune of several crores was demanded from Sukh Jiwan who was ordered to collect it from the Kashmiris by any means, fair or foul. When the impoverished people heard of this demand they organised strong resistance and under the leadership of Abul Hassan Bandey totally refused to pay. Meanwhile they induced Sukh Jiwan to extern Khwaja Kijak and his Afghan sympathisers from the Valley. Thus encouraged, Sukh Jiwan acted accordingly and defeating the Afghan forces at Baramula freed the Valley of their tyrannies.

The defeat of Khwaja Kijak enraged Ahmad Shah. At the head of a formidable force of 30,000 Afghan, Ishk Aqasi was again deputed to Kashmir to reduce the kingdom. But the Afghans chose a wrong time for attack. In mid-winter when the passes lay under 20 feet of snow, the Afghans were goaded into action. The result of the battle was a foregone conclusion. Sukh Jiwan Mal at the head of his determined though poorly equipped Kashmiri army, delivered a massive assault and the benumbed Afghans were completely annihilated. Those who survived the bullets and swords of the Kashmiris were taken prisoner and sent in humiliating costumes to the city to be jeered at by the victorious Kashmiris.

Meanwhile Ahmad Shah's authority in the Punjab was being challenged by the Imperial forces and his governor Mughlani Begum was

taken prisoner by Ghazi-ud-din, the Prime minister of Alamgir II. The Marathas were gaining an ascendency in Delhi and were even making sporadic attacks far into the Punjab. In such a fluid state of political conditions, Sukh Jiwan finally declared his allegiance to the emperor at Delhi who accepted it with great alacrity. Sukh Jiwan was granted the title of 'Raja'. and became the virtual ruler of Kashmir.

On the advice of his chief minister, Abul Hassan Bandey, Raja Sukh Jiwan Mal dismissed the various Maliks or wardens of the passes appointing more trustworthy officers to these important posts. An army of 30,000 soldiers, experienced in mountain warfare, was deployed to guard them. By taking these measures he ensured the safety of the Valley from outside aggression.

But Kashmiris had fallen on evil days. A severe famine occurred in 1755 as a result of untimely rains and exactions levied earlier by Abdullah Khan Ishk Aqasi. The wise minister rose to the occasion, distributed in an equitable manner the grains for next year's seed. But unfortunately next year's crop was not a bumper one and the scarcity conditions continued for two years more. At this time there appeared a blessing in disguise. Locust swarms attacked the Valley but fortunately when there were no standing crops, these very agents of destruction when boiled in water, however, supplied food to the famine-stricken people. The Raja and his minister advanced loans to the peasants to tide over the lean years.

Another calamity seized the people. The Raja had built up a huge magazine of gunpowder near his palace. One night a fire broke out suddenly in one of the outhouses and overwhelmed the arsenal which burst forth with a tremendous explosion. The surrounding locality together with its inhabitants was utterly destroyed. Apart from the huge loss in men and material, the destruction of valuable stock of gunpowder weakened the defensive power of the Raja at a very critical time.

Raja Sukh Jiwan was a man of high literary tastes. A poet himself, he extended his patronage to men of learning and every evening he held discussions and symposia with the litterateurs of his time. He was particularly interested in the study of the history of Kashmir and employed a band of accomplished historians of his time to write a comprehensive history. He was above all narrow sectarian and religious bigotry. On every Friday he would be present at the congregational prayers of Muslims in Jama Masjid. He was a perfect gentleman, truthful and just.

But his end was not happy. Ahmad Shah Abdali was biding his time to deal a blow on the Raja. He sent back the Kashmiri noble, Mir Muqim Kanth, to the Valley to sow discord between the Raja and his able minister, Abul Hassan Bandey.

The honest and straightforward Raja's mind was quickly poisoned against his minister. Then followed a chain of unhappy events leading eventually to the destruction of the good work undertaken by this ruler. Abul Hassan was dismissed on a false charge of attempting to murder the Raja and Mir Muqim Kanth was appointed in his place. But the Raja after a few months realised his mistake, dismissed Kanth and reappointed Abul Hassan.

At about this time (1758) the power of Abdali was at a very low ebb in the Punjab. The Marathas were invited by Adina Beg, governor of Jullundur, to occupy the province. They drove away the forces as well as the viceroy of Abdali across the Indus and carried their arms deep into the Punjab. Raja Sukh Jiwan in order to profit by the weak state of the Afghans planned to undertake a conquering expedition to the neighbouring principalities of Bhimber and Rajauri. A force of 10,000 strong was sent to attack Sialkot and Bhimber. The Afghan governor of Sialkot, Yar Khan, with the help of the Raja of Jammu, Ranjit Dev, who looked with suspicion on the activities of the Kashmir ruler, defeated the forces of Raja Sukh Jiwan and forced them to retreat to the Valley without any substantial gain. These reverses considerably undermined his position in Kashmir. The Bombas of the Jhelum valley attacked the northern districts of the Valley but the Raja promptly drove them out. Hearing of the defeat of the Raja's forces in Sialkot, Abul Hassan, who was already disgusted with the treatment meted out to him, raised his banner of revolt and established his forces on the right bank of the river. Raja Sukh Jiwan quickly attacked him and Bandey was forced to flee to Poonch where he ended his life. There followed consequently rapid changes in administration, weakening his position further. At last he appointed Mahanand Dhar as his chief minister and at his instigation he began a policy of religious persecution. The sympathies of the people were thus alienated. The Raja invited a large number of Brahmins from the Punjab and settled them in the Valley, hoping thus to be able to retain his position against the Muslim subjects. Instead of protecting his interests, these mercenaries engaged themselves in loot and arson.

Nur-ud-din Khan Bamzai

Meanwhile Ahmad Shah Abdali had recrossed the Indus, brought

the Punjab under his sway and dealt a heavy blow on the rising power of the Marathas. On his return from Delhi, he sent a punitive expedition against Sukh Jiwan from Lahore in 1762 under the leadership of Nur-ud-din Khan Bamzai. Crossing the Tosamaidan pass the Afghan forces entered Kashmir and bivouacked on the Chera Udur *Karewa*. Sukh Jiwan at the head of a force of 40,000 soldiers marched to give battle to the enemy, but no sooner had the fight started than a major portion of his army deserted to the Afghans and he was captured. When presented before Nur-ud-din Khan he was ordered to be blinded. In this miserable condition he was carried to Lahore and brought in presence of Ahmad Shah who got him trampled to death under the feet of an elephant.

Thus ended the life of a ruler who has been highly spoken of by contemporary historians, Muslim as well as Hindu. But for the unstable conditions prevailing all around Kashmir and covetous eyes cast on the Valley by the Afghans, his rule should have been one of the most successful in Kashmir.

After quelling the rebellious elements in Kashmir during a year's stay, Noor-ud-din returned to Kabul, leaving the administration of the province in the hands of Buland Khan Bamzai.

The new governor was a man given to the pleasures of life. The Shia-Sunni conflicts again became the order of the day. Due to the scarcity of rains, the Sunnis of the city were busy at prayer in the Idgah Maidan when someone reported that the Shias of a neighouring locality had uttered some disrespectful words about the four Caliphs. The congregated Muslims were enraged and going into a hot frenzy, they looted the property of the Shias and set their houses on fire. Buland Khan at once appeared on the scene and succeeded in restoring peace. A few days later he held an inquiry and finding the Shias to have been initially at fault, inflicted severe punishment on their leaders.

Close at the heels of man-made trouble came a natural calamity in the shape of a severely cold winter when the Jhelum and all the lakes and nullahs were frozen deep (1764). To keep themselves warm people cut down fruit trees and in many cases they pulled down timber off the roofs of their own buildings. In the midst of the sufferings of the Kashmiris, Buland Khan gave up the administration of Kashmir and while on his way to his home he died at Jammu.

In 1764 Ahmad Shah Abdali again deputed Nur-ud-din Khan Bamzai as his governor of Kashmir. Being a wise administrator and of mild disposition, he thought it best to associate the two leading nobles of

Kashmir with his government. The Kanth and the Dhar families were then headed by Mir Muqim and Pandit Kailash respectively. He appointed the former as his Dewan and the latter as the revenue collector. For some time the two carried on with their work in perfect accord, but their rivalry at the court strained their relations. Mir Muqim induced Nur-ud-din Khan to force the Pandit to make the payment of the stipulated revenue in daily instead of monthly instalments. This put Kailash Dhar in a great quandary. Mir Muqim was at this time murdered and it was widely suspected that Kailash Dhar's hand was behind this crime. In proof of Kailash Dhar's guilt, Mir Muqim's relations produced before Nur-ud-din the pistol with which the shots were fired at the victim. The pistol, it was alleged, belonged to Kailash Dhar since his initials were engraved upon it. But the governor wisely refrained from implicating the Pandit in the conspiracy. He, however, consoled and comforted the sons and relatives of Mir Muqim, but the injury was too deep to be easily forgotten by them. Thenceforth they carried a personal vendetta against Kailash Dhar and his family. Mir Muqim's son Faqir Ullah, failing to have his grievances redressed at the hands of Nur-ud-din, fled the Valley and took shelter with Raja Muhammad Khan Bomba of Muzaffarabad.

In 1765 Ahmad Shah Abdali recrossed the Indus and entered Lahore. To meet his Chief, Nur-ud-din left for that city leaving the government of the Valley in the hands of his nephew, Jan Muhammad Khan and appointing one Gurmukha Singh as his chief adviser. No sooner had he turned his back on the Valley than one of his proteges, a Jagirdar of Biru Pargana, Lal Khan Khattak, attacked Jan Muhammad Khan's forces and defeating them proclaimed his independence. Given to fits of insane rage, he let loose an orgy of loot, murder and arson on the Kashmiris in general and the Hindus in particular. Whole families were wiped off, their valuables looted and the members either put to the sword or drowned in the Dal lake. Nor were the Shias spared. It was alleged by some miscreants that one Hafiz Abdullah, a Shia by faith, was secretly propagating the doctrines of his religion disguised as a Sunni. The man was apprehended and produced before the leading Qazi who after recording the statements of 22 witnesses (as required by the Shariat) cut off his head with his own hand. Nature too did not spare the hard pressed Kashmiris. A severe famine took a heavy toll of human life. Lal Khan carried on his depredations for six months when Ahmad Shah Abdali sent a strong force under Khurram Khan who was appointed as governor (1766-67).

The new governor was of a mild disposition and not prone to

religious bigotry. He tried to repair the damage done to Kashmir and its administration by the tyrannical policies of Lal Khan. In order to restore confidence among the Hindus, he appointed Kailash Dhar his chief minister. But he was of a superstitious and pusillanimous nature. When Abdali's forces were again driven out of the Punjab by the Sikhs, Faqir Ullah Kānth induced his patron Muhammad Khan Bomba to make a bid for the throne of Kashmir. The Bomba chief organised a small force and by-passing Baramula reached Sopore. Khurram Khan and Kailash Dhar at the head of the Afghan army went to destroy him and his forces. But Faqir Ullah Kanth again made a detour and carried his forces to the western hills of the Valley. Out-manoeurved, Khurram Khan retraced his steps to Pattan leaving the Baramula pass to his deputy, Amir Khan Jawansher, to guard. The Afghan forces were about to go into action when the superstition of an inauspicious omen seized Khurram Khan and he ordered his forces to retreat to Srinagar. The Bombas after making a junction with the followers of Lal Khan Khattak at Biru marched to Srinagar which was quickly evacuated by Khurram. Pursued by his enemies, he abandoned the Valley and fled to Kabul *via* the Pir Punjal pass and the Punjab. Kailash Dhar followed suit. Thus without striking a blow the city fell into the hands of Faqir Ullah Kanth and his Bomba supporters.

For a week the furious Bombas, the traditional enemies of Kashmiris, satiated their thirst for murder and arson on the poor citizens. Shrieks of orphaned children and the wailings of old and infirm women rent the sky. For weeks the streets of Srinagar emitted nauseating odour from ¬utrefied bodies. At last Faqir Ullah Kanth called a halt to these insane acts and requested his allies to depart for their homes.

For one year (1767) Faqir Ullah Kanth managed to remain at the head of the administration of the Valley, for the first few months owning allegiance to Ahmad Shah Abdali who was content to accept it so long as he received a substantial tribute. Abdali was too much occupied with his troubles in Afghanistan and the Punjab to look into the doings of his deputies in Kashmir. Faqir Ullah had thus a free hand and in order to avenge the murder of his father, he put hundreds of Hindus to death. To escape his fury many accepted the faith of Islam and many left the Valley to seek refuge in India.

This was the beginning of a fresh mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits to the plains of India. Those who somehow braving the sufferings of a long and arduous journey on foot to reach their place of refuge, settled in different cities like Allahabad, Lucknow, and Delhi. Believing himself

to be invincible and taking undue advantage of Abdali's discomfiture in the Punjab, Faqir Ullah Kanth like his predecessors threw off the allegiance to Abdali. And then he gave himself up freely to wine and women under the influence of which he issued the most cruel orders. A tyrant as he was, he took special pleasure in perpetrating the most heinous acts. On a trivial provocation he got his maternal uncle trampled to death under the feet of a horse. No wonder that nearly half the population of Kashmir left the terror-stricken land for good.

But he was doomed. As soon as Abdali came to know of his misdeeds and cruelties, he deputed Nur-ud-din Khan Bamzai again to occupy Kashmir and to punish the insurgents. On reaching the outskirts of the Valley, Nur-ud-din tried to win over Faqir Ullah Kanth by reminding him of his previous associations with the Afghans and assuring him that if he surrendered he would be allowed to continue as the viceroy. But the swollen-headed Kanth did not care even to send a reply. Nur-ud-din therefore determined to use force and entering the Valley by the Tosamaidan pass launched a two-pronged attack from Gauripor and Chandyul. The rebel forces were routed and Kanth sought safety in his retreat to Srinagar. The royal army, however, was at his heels and Kanth who had been greatly upset fled to the Karnah hills where due to excessive drinking he ended his life.

For the third time Nur-ud-din Khan Bamzai (1767-70) took over the administration of Kashmir and again he proved himself to be a military leader rather than an able administrator. After subduing the insurgents he began to enjoy himself and left the administration of the province in the hands of the erstwhile rebel, Lal Khan, who had remained unbeaten in his strong fortress at Biru when Khurram Khan had been deputed by Abdali to subdue him. He now professed loyalty to Nur-ud-din and soon usurped all power into his hands. He induced Nur-ud-din to ignore all orders and instructions from Kabul and to oppose the entry into the Valley of his successor, Muhammad Khan Khazanchi, appointed by Ahmad Shah. Muhammad Khan was easily defeated at Muzaffarabad and he repaired to Abdali's court to bewail his discomfiture at the hands of Nur-ud-din.

Meanwhile Khurram Khan and his friend Kailash Dhar acquired sufficient influence at the Kabul court to be able to regain the patronage of Abdali. The intransigence of Nur-ud-din gave them an opportunity to put forth their claims and offered their services to Abdali in reducing Nur-ud-din. Hurriedly a force of 20,000 Afghans was equipped and despatched to Kashmir under Khurram Khan and Kailash Dhar. Fearing dire punishment at the hands of Abdali if captured, Nur-ud-din left Lal

Khan in charge of the operations and himself went to Jammu to watch the course that the subsequent events would take.

When Khurram reached Muzaffarabad, Lal Khan in order to test the strength of his forces sent his brother, Saif Khan with a reconnoitring force. He received a good beating at the hands of Khurram and retreating to Baramula advised his brother not to contest the forces of Abdali. Lal Khan therefore retreated to his mountain fortress and left the field clear for Khurram Khan who captured Srinagar without firing a shot.

Khurram Khan who ruled for only six months in 1771 bestowed his first attention to the reduction of Lal Khan and for this purpose deputed his commander Amir Khan Jawansher with a strong punitive force. But Lal Khan was strongly entrenched and regularly received fresh reinforcements from Poonch. The fort too was so situated as to make it impregnable. Frequently he would conduct marauding sallies into the Biru and Bhangil Parganas of Kashmir and after collecting tribute from the villagers retreat to his hide-out. Khurram Khan, feeble-minded as he was, could not act with determination and sufficient persistence and thus Lal Khan continued to be a source of trouble to the Pathans and Kashmiris. Ultimately Amir Khan Jawansher reported the inefficiency of Khurram to Abdali who dismissed him and appointed Jawansher in his place. Khurram left the Valley by way of Jammu where one day previous to his arrival Nur-ud-din Khan had breathed his last.

Amir Khan Jawansher, Qizilbash and a Shia by religion, assumed the governorship of Kashmir at a time when Abdali's rule was passing through a crisis (1771). In his declining years Abdali was witnessing the extinction of his dynasty due to the out-break of a fratricidal war among his sons and grandsons. The Punjab had already succeeded in throwing off his yoke and Abdali's authority in India had nearly crippled. Secluded and protected by high mountains, Kashmir had better chances to assert its independence than the Punjab. Amir Khan therefore waited for an opportunity to satisfy his ambitions.

But he made a bad start. Appointing Mir Fazal Kanth as his chief minister he gave himself up to a life of voluptuousness. The natural beauty of Kashmir enraptured him. He built a summer house in the middle of the Dal Lake on an artificial island made by dumping earth-filled boats and stones into the water. By means of Persian wheels he took water up to the roof of the five-storied pavilion from where a system of cascades and fountains was fed. One morning while basking in the sun his eyes fell on a beautiful *hanji* girl whom he later married and made his queen. Numerous were the days and nights which he spent in her

company on the beautiful waters of the Dal lake, when musicians and dancers would entertain the royal couple with their choice performances.

The people, however, were not left in peace. Fazal Kanth in order to avenge the murder of Mir Muqim, beheaded Kailash Dhar in the open court and as usual let loose a reign of terror on the helpless Pandits. Lal Khan Khattak coming out of his fort pillaged the Pargana of Nagam and the adjacent villages. Saif Khan, his brother, became so bold as to lead his marauding followers into Srinagar. He set fire to the beautiful palaces of Raja Sukh Jiwan situated in the Zaldagar Mohalla and killed a large number of citizens. These rude shocks awakened Amir Khan to action.

Finding that Lal Khan and his brother Saif Khan had willing helpers in the persons of some Afghans in the rank and file of his own army, he apprehended 300 of his leading military officers and got them beheaded in Nur Bagh below the precincts of the city. Fortunately for him Lal Khan died and to show respect to a brave and independent adversary, Amir Khan brought his dead body from his fort and got it buried with due honours in the courtyard of Shah Hamadan mosque. This act won him the friendship and loyalty of Saif Khan.

In 1771 a devastating flood washed away all the bridges in Srinagar and most of the houses too. While the Kashmiris were passing through natural as well as man-made catastrophies, news came that Ahmad Shah Abdali had breathed his last at Kandahar.

Timur Shah

Ahmad Shah Abdali had four sons, the eldest being Timur. The other three, Sulaiman, Sikandar and Parvez, had been kept under detention by their father. At the time of Ahmad Shah Abdali's death, Timur was in charge of the province of Herat. The prime minister, Shah Wali Khan, thinking his absence from the capital to be an opportune moment to advance the interests of his son-in-law, Sulaiman, the second son of Abdali. released him and put him on the throne. But Timur on hearing of his father's death hastily came to the capital with a strong and tried contingent of his followers and after killing the minister Shah Wali and wiping off all opposition ascended the throne and struck coins in his own name. His strong action actually stemmed the rising tide of civil war in Afghanistan. He transferred his capital from Kandahar to Kabul.

Timur reigned for 20 years and during this period he led four expeditions into the Punjab. But these were so feebly conducted that he

suffered ignominious defeats at the hands of the Sikhs. During one of these raids into the Punjab, a governor of his, Azad Khan, declared himself independent ruler of Kashmir. Timur's possessions in Iran were also a source of friction with the ruler of that country.

But apart from these minor incursions, Timur seems to have learnt a lesson from his father's troubled rule. His reign was comparatively peaceful in Afghanistan and consequently the Afghan rule in Kashmir was firmly consolidated. All the same the Afghan rulers — and Timur not excepted — considered Kashmir a source of rich tribute rather than a dependency to be ruled justly and humanely. Consequently their barbarities perpetrated on the people were continued in an aggravated form.

Finding that the Government of Afghanistan had fallen into strong hands of Timur, Amir Khan Jawansher quickly remitted his tribute to the new king. In return he bestowed on him the title of Dilir Jung and confirmed his appointment as the governor of Kashmir. He continued to administer the province till the year 1776.

Amir Khan Jawansher is now chiefly known as the builder of the first bridge of Srinager — Amira Kadal. He also built the Sher Ghari, the premises of the present secretariat and Legislative Assembly on the banks of the Jhelum below the Amira Kadal bridge. He laid out a beautiful garden on the western bank of the Dal lake calling it by the name of Amirabad. It is said that he laid waste the old city of Akbar in order to build a palace on the island of Suna Lank in the Dal. His bad example was followed by his *hanji* relatives living on the shores of the lake who nearly destroyed 700 Mughal gardens for building their own homes with the material thereof. It is he who connected the Anchar and the Dal lakes by a canal still bearing his name.

It must go to the credit of Amir Khan that he reformed and reorganised the army which was composed entirely of Kashmiris. With its help he had planned to establish an independent kingdom in Kashmir. But being a Shia by faith his intentions were looked upon with suspicion by a majority of the people who were Sunnis. Nor was there a dearth of evil persons to fan the fire of religious bigotry. Amir Khan ultimately fell a prey to it.

Timur's preoccupation with his Bukhara compaign emboldened Amir Khan Jawansher to declare his independence. He at once instituted a reign of terror for the Sunnis. Many leading Kashmiri nobles were apprehended, tried and killed on flimsy charges. For the purpose of

holding the mourning sessions on the anniversary of Hassan and Hussein's death he prepared an *Imambara* on the banks of the Dal lake. He prevailed upon the Sunni Mullahs to read their prayers according to the Shia tenets. All these measures naturally inflamed the passions of the people who sent their emissaries to Timur Shah at Kabul and prayed for his intervention.

But Amir Khan was not taken unawares. He entered into friendly relations with the chief of Muzaffarabad, Muhammad Khan Bomba, and when Timur despatched one of his nobles, Ali Akbar Khan, at the head of a small force to take over the governorship from Amir Khan, the Bombas launched a guerrilla warfare against them. Ali Akbar Khan lost more than half his forces and returned to Kabul in defeat.

Amir Khan was greatly elated by this success. He invited his ally, Muhammad Khan, to Sopore where he was entertained and thanked for his timely help. He also entered into matrimonial relations with two Khakha chiefs of the Baramula Pass — Wali Khan and Amir Khan. A strong fort to guard the Zoji-la was built by him where he posted his own forces over the head of the hereditary Malik of that Pass.

But Timur Shah could not brook these insulting activities of Amir Khan for long. He despatched a strong force to Kashmir under the leadership of Haji Karim Dad Khan. This time Amir Khan acted diplomatically. Knowing well that he had no chances against the Haji's forces, he entered into correspondence with influential nobles at Timur's court to intercede in his behalf. The trick succeeded and Haji Karim Dad Khan's expedition was recalled and the governorship confirmed in the name of Amir Khan Jawansher.

But he had learnt nothing from his bitter experience. The people continued to groan under his iron heel. Ultimately the popular discontent assumed the shape of an open rebellion which gave thorough shaking to the governor. Amir Khan, therefore, adopted a more conciliatory attitude towards the people and deputed his Kashmiri officials to pacify the leaders of the rebellion. They were, however, in no mood to listen. A deputation of popular leaders secretly left for Kabul and induced Timur Shah to finally dismiss Amir Khan. Again Haji Karim Dad left with a strong force and although his passage was greatly hampered by the activities of Amir Khan's allies, the Bombas and Khakhas, he ultimately succeeded in conducting his army safely to Baramula.

Amir Khan sent his forces under Tar Quli Khan to meet him. Haji Karim Dad effected a crossing of the river Jhelum a few miles above

Baramula and successfully cut off Tar Quli Khan's retreat. Tar Quli, however, finding the Kashmiri force under him wavering, thought it wiser to cross over to the camp of the Haji. Similarly another Kashmiri force under Mir Fazal Kanth went over in a body to the Haji and Amir Khan, defeated and deserted, fled to the Pir panjal where he was ultimately captured and sent to Kabul. He passed several years in captivity but in the end Timur forgave him and set him free.

Kashmir had unfortunately not yet come to the end of its troubles. With the accession of Haji Karim Dad Khan to gubernatorial chair, Kashmir entered into the darkest period of its history. During his seven years of rule, untold cruelties were perpetrated on the people. For the sheer pleasure of killing, numberless Kashmiris were drowned in the Dal. The levy of taxes of various nature reduced the populace to penury and indigence.

After the capture of Amir Khan, Haji Karim Dad Khan began his rule with the appointment of Mir Fazal Kanth as revenue collector and chief minister. But very soon he was dismissed and then killed on a false charge of delaying collections. He then raised a poor Kashmiri Pandit, Dila Ram Quli to the post of chief minister. But even he could not in the least succeed in reducing his ferocity.

Calling his son Murtaza Khan from Kabul, he deputed him to subdue the frontier district of Skardu (1779). Murtaza after bitter fighting was successful in his mission and when Haji Karim Dad sent the report of this victory to Timur Shah, the latter was highly pleased and conferred on him the little of "Shuja-ul-Mulk".

Invasion of Kashmir by Raja of Jammu

Meanwhile Raja Ranjit Dev of Jammu had acquired sufficient power to consider seriously the conquest of the Kashmir Valley. Karim Dad's tyrannical rule goaded the peace-loving people to seeking aid from whichever quarter it could be procured to overthrow him. The disgruntled members of the Kanth family as well as the chiefs of Khakha and Bomba tribes sent secret emissaries to Ranjit Dev promising him active aid in case he attempted an invasion of the Valley. In 1779 while Haji Karim Dad was busy in subjugating Skardu, the Jammu Raja launched an attack via the Banihal pass with a force of 20,000 soldiers. But Karim Dad's Afghan forces got timely intelligence and lying in ambush behind rocks and in the side valleys they fell upon the enemy suddenly and with such fury that Ranjit Dev's army had to retreat in grave disorder.

Returning to Srinagar in a triumphal procession he was not slow to act against those who had plotted to overthrow him. The Kanth family was practically wiped off. But the Khakhas and Bombas were of a different metal. In 1780 he organised a well-equipped and well-trained army of 7,000 soldiers and marched at its head to punish Muhammad Khan, the Bomba chief. Feigning submission the Khakha chief, Fateh Khan, offered to guide the army to the rear of Muhammad Khan's main forces situated at Muzaffarabad. Tar Quli Khan easily fell into the trap and when his army crossed a few high passes over the Karnah range, they were met by the combined forces of the Khakhas and Bombas who, after defeating and destroying them, captured him alive. To add insult to injury they sent Tar Quli, bound hand and foot, to Karim Dad. Flying into a rage he ordered the general to be killed and his dead body kept hanging from the Zaina Kadal bridge.

The same year there befell another calamity on the stricken people of Kashmir. A severe earthquake destroyed many towns and villages and shocks of great severity were of frequent occurrence for six months more. Further trials and tribulaions were in store for them during the succeeding winter which proved to be bad, the lakes and rivers remaining frozen for months together.

Cruel Exactions

The thirst for blood and money induced Haji Karim Dad Khan to commit the basest acts on the Kashmiri people. Without considerations of caste or creed he levied numerous unjust and killing taxes which resulted in complete impoverishment of the people.[1] The rich Jagirdars and nobles had to pay a tax called *nazarana*, which amounted to four and even six times their income. Most of them after selling their property stole themselves out of the Valley. The traders and shopkeepers had to pay *Zari Ashkhas*, a sort of levy on goods imported into or exported from the Valley. This shattered the economy of the country. The farmers had to pay an enormous tax on their produce and in order to meet the remorseless demands of his tax gatherers — Aslam and Babu Harkara — the peasants cut down all the fruit growing trees in the villages selling them as firewood. Within a month the whole Valley was denuded of its fruit wealth. Haji Karim Dad took special pleasure in inventing new and novel methods of levying taxes. Once, for example, he purposely kept the tax gatherers, Aslam and Babu, in hiding accusing the Pandit community of

1. Muhammad-ud-din Fauq, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, p.301. See also Sufi's *Kashir*, Vol. I, p. 316.

their murder. He collected their leading members and keeping them in close confinement subjected them to suffocating fumes from cowdung. They implored, they importunated, but the heartless Haji would not release them until they agreed to pay an annual tax (known as *Zari Dood* or smoke money) of 50,000 rupees. The Kashmir shawl was getting popular in Europe resulting in a brisk trade. It could not escape the eye of the Haji. He imposed a heavy tax on this trade innovating the system of *Dag Shawl* or excise-tax on shawls which later on became such a heavy burden on the poor shawl-weavers that they preferred death to the weaver's profession.

Muhammad Khan's independent status was still tormenting him. In 1781, he himself led an expedition against the Bombas. Scoring an initial success more through diplomacy and cunning than with the prowess of arms, he succeeded in luring Bhira Khan Khakha the chief of the tribe into his trap. No sooner was he presented before him than the Haji sent him as a prisoner to Srinagar in chains. Bereft of the aid of his Khakha friends, Muhammad Khan could not offer an effective resistance and Karim Dad marched in triumph into Muzaffarabad sacking the town and killing numerous inhabitants. On his return, however, Bahadur Khan, the son of the captured chief, after collecting a few hundred of his followers, made a surprise raid on his army in the narrow defiles of the passes and dispersed it. At once the whole area was up in arms against the invaders. They looted their supplies, ambushed and destroyed the major portion of the army, and cut down the stragglers. Karim Dad managed to escape with only seven of his followers. On reaching Baramula he hurriedly threw up defences. Vexed and mortified at the severe beating he had received, he rode straight to Srinagar in order to work off his spleen on the incarcerated Bhira Khan and other prisoners of war. The former was ordered to be killed in the courtyard of his palace and his followers to be drowned every day in batches of ten in the Dal lake.

Knowing well the deep hatred that the Kashmiris of all classes bore towards this tyrant and counting upon the dissatisfaction of the population, Sikandar Shah, a younger brother of Timur Shah appeared with a few of his followers in the Kamraj district of the Valley in 1783. He hoped thus to achieve two objects — capture a kingdom for himself and reduce the power and authority of Timur Shah. Karim Dad despatched his son, Azad Khan against the pretender. Finding that the power of all resistance had been completely destroyed in the masses, Sikandar fled. Azad Khan returned to the capital in triumph. The same year saw the death of Karim Dad and the accession of his son, Azad Khan to the governor's chair.

The poplar avenue from the Amira Kadal to the foot of Sankaracharya hill standing till very recent years, was perhaps the only good deed that can be ascribed to Haji Karim Dad, besides the doubtful record of his having repaired the roof of the Ali Masjid at the Idgah in Srinagar.

Azad Khan outdid his father in demoniacal terrorisation and victimisation of all classes of Kashmiris. At the age of 18 he started his cruel reign and instilled such a terror into his courtiers that they used to tremble before him. Given to epicurean habits, he took special pride in the grandeur of his court. With shining and richly swords and wearing gorgeous dresses the officials, ministers and the slaves would stand mute and motionless when he held his court.

Appointing Dila Ram as his chief minister, he set out on the military conquest of bordering principalities. In 1783 he captured the Raja of Kishtwar to whom, however, he handed back the valley in Jagir contenting himself with the receipt of a rich annual tribute. Next he turned his attention to Poonch. Raja Rustam Khan, the chief of the principality sought safety in flight and Azad Khan's forces gave themselves up to looting and killing the inhabitants of this hill state. The chief minister of Rustam, Gobind Pandit, was killed in the city-square and Azad returned to Srinagar laden with much booty. Next year he led another expedition to Poonch and Rustam this time purchased his life and kingdom by offering costly presents in cash and kind and also a heavy tribute to Azad. Similarly he demanded and received tribute from the Raja of Rajauri.

The Khakha and Bomba chiefs of Muzaffarabad were still at large and were off and on conducting marauding raids into the Valley. Azad Khan determined to end this menace once and for all. Collecting together a compact but efficient and experienced army, he ordered a host of Kashmiris to collect and carry provisions for his forces free of any wages. This forced labour wrought havoc among the peasants who had to leave their hearths and homes at a time when their presence was vitally needed to tend their fields. Heavy was the cost which the people of the Valley had to pay in misery and death for this campaign, since as a direct result of this *begar* a severe famine occurred in Kashmir taking a heavy toll of human life. Azad Khan, however, succeeded in reducing the chieftains to submission and establishing his garrisons at many strategic points in the Muzaffarabad valley.

Azad Declares His Independence

This victory, however, turned his head and he began to dream of independence. Timur's discomfiture at the hands of the Sikhs in the

Punjab in 1784, finally settled it. Imprisoning his brother Muhammad Jan and two leading Afghan nobles, Gaffar Khan and Asghar Khan, who showed friendly leanings towards the king, he proclaimed himself an independent ruler of Kashmir assuming the title of Nadir Shah the Second. For once Azad showed his generosity towards the Kashmiris. A grand *Durbar* was held and the riches so mercilessly collected by his father were freely distributed among loyal followers and courtiers.

The news of Azad Khan's declaration of independence was carried to Timur Shah when he was returning from his unsuccessful expedition to the Punjab. He was therefore in no mood to send a punitive force to subdue the rebel. Instead he sent a clever envoy, Kifayat Khan, to advise Azad to desist from taking such a rash and impolitic step. Success attended Kifayat's mission inasmuch as he returned to Kabul with a profession of Azad's loyalty to Timur in proof of which he presented a sum of three lakhs as tribute.

But Timur would not forgive Azad's disloyalty and remain a silent spectator to the destruction of one of his best paying provinces. Next year he sent a force of 15,000 Afghans under Azad's own brother, Murtaza Khan, to Kashmir. But Azad was forewarned. Reaching Muzaffarabad by rapid marches he stationed his forces on an advantageous point from where the enemy was exposed to merciless attack as soon as he attempted a crossing of the Kishenganga river. For seven days the battle raged in all its fury. Many a time Azad was on the brink of defeat, but manfully regrouping and rearranging his men and infusing courage and discipline among them by his personal example, he succeeded at last in completely routing the royal forces who returned to Kabul in a pitiable condition. Azad returned to Srinagar in triumph.

But the spectre of a severe famine and a ruinous epidemic had already fallen on the Valley. Azad's tyrannies coupled with his levy of forced labour and the complete blockade of the Valley by the royal forces, resulted in a total dislocation of agricultural and other economic activities. Very soon people began to die like flies. Cholera also took a heavy toll of life. The shortage of all essential commodities added to the miseries of the people. Salt could not be had even for its weight in silver. While the country was passing through these dark days, Murtaza Khan again launched an offensive hoping to profit by the troubles of the people. But again Azad gave him a crushing defeat.

Signs of popular discontent were becoming visible and the down-trodden people showed great agitation through various political activi-

ties. As usual the Sirdar being informed by his secret agents of these activities many nobles and leading citizens were apprehended and put to the sword. But even then Azad did not feel himself safe. Changing his tactics he sent his envoys to Kabul to ask the king's pardon for all his misdeeds and to invoke his aid. But Timur would not forgive. He again despatched Kifayat to Kashmir to arrange the release of some of his commanders taken prisoner by Azad in the Kishenganga battle. Azad treated the envoy with great respect but did not carry out his wishes. Instead he killed the prisoners outside his palace, apparently in retaliation to the king's refusal to grant him pardon.

But meanwhile the fire of sedition was being fanned by certain disgruntled nobles of Kashmir. The net result of it was that there broke out an organised rebellion and a serious attempt was made to assassinate Azad. The rebels had engaged a bravado for this purpose. He entered Azad's bedchamber and firing two pistol shots at him jumped from the window. Luckily for Azad the bullet hit his thigh and fearing further assault he ran out of the room and jumped into a boat. A hail of bullets followed him but all missed their mark due to pitch darkness. This was a signal for the insurgents who, led by Azmat Khan, captured the palace and marched in force to Dila Ram Quli's house where Azad had taken refuge. A pitched battle ensued and Azad's followers finding themselves outnumbered fled to the Bijbihara fort. There they organised a resistance and when Azmat Khan and his follwers made an attack, Azad's followers easily defeated them. Regrouping his forces and enlisting a large number of Pathans, Azad Khan marched to Srinagar and laid siege to Sher Garhi fort where Azmat had taken up his position. For a fortnight the siege lasted when Azmat finding himself short of provisions determined to escape during the night. But Azad made hot pursuit. Azmat's riders were hunted down, until the remnants of his army abandoned him and with a few that remained faithful he sought refuge in the savage gorges of the Pir Panjal range. Aided by mountain guides, Azad captured Azmat together with his leutenants, Pahalwan Khan and Malokh Khan and about 20 of his followers. Brought to Srinagar in chains, they were publicly executed.

Again Kashmir had severe visitations in the shape of a conflagration which destroyed a large portion of the city. Next year a severe earthquake laid waste a good number of houses, their inmates being crushed to death.

Azad Khan's Defeat and Death

Timur was thirsting for revenge. The blood of his generals whom

Azad executed before the eyes of his envoy, was still crying from the ground. With a force of 30,000 chosen warriors, he sent Madad Khan Ishkzai to lay Azad low.

This time the royal forces moved more warily. They marched in two columns, one crossing the river above Baramula and the other making a rapid advance through the Karnah Pass appeared in the Uttermachhi Pargana. Aided and guided by the disgruntled and dispossessed Kashmiri nobles, Madad Khan's main column making a detour of the hills, captured Srinagar and attacked Azad's forces from the rear. It was in this battle that this dare-devil youth showed his mettle. Deserted by most of his trusted commanders he quickly rallied his followers and destroying his enemy's defences threw his whole army into the battle. For the whole day the royal army launched attack after attack and wherever it succeeded in making a breach, Azad with conspicuous gallantry personally appeared on the scene to stem the tide and hurl back the enemy's onslaughts. But the odds were against him. Outnumbered and outmanoeuvred by Madad Khan's forces, deserted by his own followers and sabotaged by his tyrannised subjects, Azad lost the day and the royal forces entered the capital in triumph. Azad in the guise of a barber fled to Poonch where he was given shelter for some time by the Raja of that principality. But his ambitious nature goaded him into organising a rebellion against his protector. His days were numbered. The Raja's forces surrounded him and Madad Khan's general, Islam Khan, appearing on the scene tried to capture him alive. But Azad was too clever to fall into his hands. Ultimately finding that he had no way of escape he ended his life by committing suicide (1785AD).

Haji Karim Dad and his son Azad were nothing short of a scourge on the people of Kashmir. An idea of the enormity of their crimes against the Kashmiris can be had from the account of Forster who visited the Valley in 1783. Writes he:

> "Azad Khan the present Governor of Kashmir, of the Afghan tribe, succeeded his father Hadji Karim Dad, a domestic officer of Ahmad Shah Durani, and who was, at the death of that prince, advanced to the Government of Kashmir by Timur Shah as a reward for quelling the rebellion of Amir Khan who has been already mentioned. Though the Kashmirians exclaim with bitterness at the administration of Hadji Karim Dad, who was notorious for his wanton cruelties and insatiable avarice often, for trivial offences throwing the inhabitants, tied by the back in pairs, into the river, plundering their property, and forcing their women of every descrip-

tion; yet they say he was systematical tyrant, and attained his purposes, however atrocious, through a fixed medium. They hold a different language in speaking of the son, whom they denominate the Zaulim Khan, a Persian phrase which expresses a tyrant without discernment; and if the smallest portion of the charges against him are true, the application is fitly bestowed. At the age of 18 years, he has few of the vices of youth; he is not addicted to the pleasures of Haram, nor to wine he does not even smoke the Hukha. But his acts of ferocity exceed common belief; they would seem to originate in the wildest caprice and to display a temper, rarely seen in the nature of man."

"That you may form some specific knowledge of character of this, let me call him infernal despot, I will mention some facts which were communicated during my residence in the province. While he was passing with his court, under one of the wooden bridges of the city, on which a crowd of people had assembled to observe the procession, he levelled his musket at an opening which he saw in the pathway, and being an expert marksman, he shot to death an unfortunate spectator. A film on one of his eyes had baffled the attempts of many operators, and being impassioned at the want of success, he told the last surgeon who had been called in, that if the disorder was not remedied within a limited time, allowing but few days, his belly should be cut open; the man failed in the cure and Azad Khan verified his threat.....Azad Khan had, in the first three months of his Government, become an object of such terror to the Kashmirians, that the casual mention of his name produced an instant horror and an involuntary supplication of the aid of their Prophet."

Forster's observations about Azad Khan and his father are typical of the conduct of most of the Afghan rulers. It was a devastated and depopulated land that Madad Khan stepped into. A few famished and miserable looking people was all that was left of its once opulent villages and towns. The cultivation of the abandoned fields was the immediate problem, as the farmer not certain of being able to enjoy the fruits of his labour was reluctant to take to his plough and pair. Fear and destitution were writ large on every face.

Madad Khan's heart was moved to pity and he tried to alleviate the sufferings of the few people still remaining in the Valley. But soon the mischievous and disgruntled elements among the nobles and officials started their old game of intrigue and disaffection against his govern-

ment. This enraged him and he let loose an orgy of repression and cruelty on his enemies and their relations and friends, and in certain instances outdid Karim Dad Khan and his son Azad Khan in cruelty and oppression.

But when after some time all opposition to his rule had been crushed, Madad Khan relaxed his harsh measures and adopted a lenient and benevolent attitude towards the people. He would arrange meetings of learned men and listen to literary and religious discourses which considerably tempered his harsh nature. He even proposed to abolish the Jazya or poll tax on the Hindus, but the collector of revenues deputed from Kabul did not agree with his humane proposal. Before, however, he could intercede on behalf of the wronged community, he was recalled to Kabul in 1786, having served as Timur's governor of Kashmir for only ten months.

He was succeeded by Mirdad Khan who appointed Mulla Guffar Khan as the collector of revenue and Dila Ram Quli as the head of the accounts office. Soon an open conflict broke out between the governor and the collector of revenues and when it came to the knowledge of Timur Shah, he deputed his trusted minister, Nishan Khan Durrani, to Kashmir to effect a reconciliation between them. But Nishan Khan found that the gulf of differences between them was too wide to be bridged and in order to retain only one of the two on the gubernatorial chair, he declared that the one who undertook to pay the highest amount to the Kabul treasury in revenue would be accepted as the governor. Mulla Guffar refused to give any such undertaking and Mirdad Khan became the undisputed governor. To fulfil his undertaking he resorted to a wholesale levy of unjust taxes and spoliation of respectable citizens, which resulted in a devastating famine and shortage of the necessities of life. There were riots against the governor and his officials. Dila Ram Quli had to face popular opposition and it was only the confidence that the governor reposed in him and his own influence that prevented his being handled roughly by the furious mob. Ultimately Mirdad Khan after a severe rule of two years fell ill and died.

For more than four years following the death of Mirdad Khan Kashmir had a little respite from repression. Juma Khan Alokzai took over in 1788, heralding his rule by the conferment of a Jagir on the famous Persian poet and scholar of Kashmir, Munshi Bhawani Dass. Juma Khan's rule, however, witnessed a serious flood which destroyed several parts of Srinagar.

At this time Timur was organising an expedition against Murad Shah, king of Bukhara, and being hard pressed for funds, demanded a larger revenue from the governor of the province of Kashmir. Juma Khan, however, went personally to Kabul with Dila Ram Quli who explained the widespread distress prevailing in Kashmir and the inability of the people to pay more.

During Juma Khan's absence from the Valley there was a serious clash between the Shia and Sunni communities and the Bomba chief of the Muzaffarabad valley indulged in loot and arson in the northern districts. The Raja of Poonch also took to systematic brigandage and looted the herdsmen of the Valley who grazed their sheep and cattle there during winter.

On Juma Khan's return from Kabul, a punitive expedition was sent against the Bombas and the Poonch ruler and within two months normal conditions were restored. Again in 1791 Timur demanded money and again Juma Khan had to proceed to Kabul to place the accounts of revenue before the king. The Bombas repeated their incursions into the Valley, but were quickly repulsed by Juma Khan who had meanwhile returned from Kabul. He was not, however, destined to rule long and died of dysentery in 1792.

Timur Shah bestowed the governorship of Kashmir on Mirza Khan who entrusted the administration to his son, Mir Hazar Khan. Mir Hazar was in charge of Kashmir for only four months when news reached him that Timur Shah had breathed his last at Kabul on 18 May 1793.

Zaman Shah

At the time of his death, Timur Shah Durrani had 21 sons alive. Of these the eldest, Prince Humayun, and Prince Mahmud, the next in age, were by one mother; and Zaman who had been declared the heir-apparent and Shuja were by another wife of Timur. As was only to be expected, there was wild excitement as to which of the numerous sons of the deceased king should be elected to the throne.

Payanda Khan, the chief of the Barakzai clan who was the most powerful of the Sirdars, favoured Zaman Shah who occupied the key-position of governor of Kabul. He won over to his view many other chiefs and the election of Zaman was finally secured by locking up the other princes and their supporters in the building to which they had been summoned. Meanwhile the citizens of Kabul declared Zaman as their

king and on 23 May 1793, public prayers were read and coins struck in his name.

But Zaman was threatened with serious and immediate dangers. For more than six months the fate of the kingdom hung in the balance, there being a number of revolts and rebellion raised by the brothers and nephews of the new king. But Zaman Shah proved a tough opponent and quickly repressed the uprisings with his vigorous measures against them.

Rebellion by Hazar Khan

Having secured some respite from troubles at home Zaman turned his attention to Kashmir. He had already confirmed Mir Hazar Khan to the governorship, but the latter taking advantage of the uncertain conditions prevailing in Afghanistan following Timur Shah's death, had declared his independence. His father, Mirza Khan, who was sent by Zaman Shah to advise him not to take such a hazardous step, was promptly imprisoned by the impetuous son.

Hazar Khan, however, began his independent rule badly. He put Dila Ram Quli to death and let loose a reign of terror against the usual targets, Shias and Hindus. Thousands of innocent Hindus tied up back to back in pairs were drowned in the Dal lake, and there rose wailings and cries of distress from the survivors of the unfortunate victims.

In 1794 Shah Zaman on his march from Peshawar had sent Ahmad Khan Ishkzai and Rahmat Ullah Khan, son of Juma Khan, with 12,000 men to garrison Attock. Orders were now sent to them to march at once on Kashmir and subdue the rebellious Hazar Khan. In spite of the difficulties they had to overcome, due to the nature of the Valley, the inclement weather that prevailed and the resistance of the enemy, these chiefs were victorious, and the news of their success, due chiefly to wholesale desertions by Hazar Khan's soldiers, reached Zaman Shah in Peshawar. Hazar Khan sought asylum in Khankah Maula, but was arrested and when after a brief rule of four months, Rahmat Ullah Khan returned to Afghanistan, he took him with himself and presented him before Zaman Shah who forgave him his past offences. Rahmat Ullah Khan took also a Pandit official, Nand Ram Tikku, with himself. This Pandit took service under Zaman Shah's prime minister, Wafadar Khan and soon rose to the high position of a minister at Kabul. Once when the Shah was engaged in one of the campaigns away from Kabul, and Nand Ram Tikku found the treasury empty, he struck coins in his own name with the inscription of *Sim az M'abud u zarb az Nand Ram,* meaning "Silver from God and coinage by Nand Ram".

Rahmat Ullah Khan was replaced by Kifayat Khan who during his one year of governorship (1794-95) tried to make amends for the misdeeds of his predecessors. Having fully acquainted himself with the pitiable condition of the people of the Valley he went to Kabul after three months to personally report to the Shah, and induced him to waive his exacting revenue demands till normal conditions were restored. During Kifayat Khan's absence, the Bomba incursions and Shia-Sunni riots again disturbed the peace of the Valley, but immediately after his return he took measures to restore normalcy. Kifayat Khan's brief but humane rule was an oasis in the otherwise cruel and despotic desert of Afghan rule in Kashmir.

Lawlessness in Kashmir

His recall to Kabul was followed by anarchical conditions which lasted for a year. Zaman Shah had conferred the governorship of Kashmir on Arsalan Khan (January 1795), who instead of proceeding personally to the provincial capital put his uncle, Muhammad Khan Jawansher, in charge of the administration and collection of revenue. Muhammad Khan's authority was, however, contested by two Afghan officials in Kashmir, namely, Khudadad Khan and Momin Khan. Zaman Shah being at that time pre-occupied with the suppression of a serious rebellion raised by his brother, Prince Humayun, could not send effective aid to Muhammad Khan and the latter after an unsuccessful skirmish entered into an agreement with them to carry on the administration jointly. The poor Kashmiris had now to meet the exactions of three instead of one master. When after nearly a year Zaman came to know of the bad state of affairs in the Valley (29 Sept. 1795) he deputed Sher Muhammad Khan, Mukhtar-ud-daula, along with Abdullah Khan Alokzai to take over the governorship and punish the insurgents. After a brief struggle the insurgents were crushed and in December Mukhtar-ud-daula placing Abdullah Khan in charge of the government of Kashmir, proceeded to Akora near Peshawar and presented the rebels before Zaman Shah who pardoned them.

Rise of Ranjit Singh

It was at about this time that another power was rising in the Punjab which had later a direct bearing on the history of Kashmir. The Sikhs, after the death of king Timur Shah Durrani, had practically captured the administration of the Punjab and beaten back the Afghan conquerors across the Indus. Zaman Shah now planned to reassert his authority in

the Punjab which ultimately led to his downfall and the emergence of Ranjit Singh as the most influential Sikh chieftain.

Zaman Shah's forces met no opposition from the Sikh chieftains when they crossed the Indus, and he entered Lahore in January 1797. Although the Afghan sovereign was at the head of 30,000 men, he strove to conciliate the Sikhs and to render his supremacy an agreeable burden to the people there. But he had been only a month in Lahore when he received the information that his brother Mahmud had revolted once more in Herat. He was thus compelled to leave Lahore and effect a retreat to his own country.

After the suppression of the revolt, Zaman Shah in pursuit of his dreams of establishing an empire to the east of the Indus, decided to resume the thread of his policy in the Punjab and in January 1798, he again marched in the direction of Lahore.

The Sikhs fled to the low hills on the borders of the Punjab and the government of Lahore was made over to Ahmad Khan Barakzai. But the king's absence from Afghanistan again encouraged prince Mahmud to raise a revolt and he had to hasten back to Afghanistan. The Sikhs came out of their hidings and overpowered Ahmad Khan Barakzai, the governor of Lahore, who lost his life in battle against them. On receiving this sad news, Zaman Shah advanced on Lahore in the fall of 1798 and without finding any opposition entered Lahore again. In despair of being able to maintain peace with an Afghan governor in the country, the Shah made up his mind to entrust the government to Ranjit Singh. The latter also coveted Lahore, the possession of which was associated in the minds of all people with the possession of power. And thus when Ranjit Singh was invested by the Shah with the office of governor of Lahore, the Sikh power in the Punjab was established both in fact and in law.

Meanwhile Abdullah Khan was entrenching himself in Kashmir. His rule which lasted for nearly six years was characterised by just and benevolent acts, which resulted in the rehabilitation of the shattered economy of the province.

The Bomba incursions into the Valley were a source of great misery to the people and Abdullah Khan determined to make an end of this menace. He led a strong expedition to crush them and succeeded in forcing their leaders to submission. Subsequently he married the daughter of the Bomba chief, Fateh Khan, and gave him his principality in Jagir. Recruiting a strong force of Bomba tribals he raised the strength of his army which had been depleted by numerous wars and defection.

With this strong force he brought the chiefs of the principalities of Poonch and Rajauri to submission.

Abdullah Khan was ably assisted in his humane administration by Pandit Hardas Tikku, the brother of Nandram Tikku who had by then risen to the high post of the Diwan of Wafadar Khan, the prime minister of Zaman Shah. Hardas who kept the Afghan king fully informed of the conditions in the province, reported to his brother about Abdullah Khan's ambition of becoming an independent ruler of Kashmir, and his secret preparations to attain his objective. This created suspicion against the governor and when he was called to Kabul by the king, he was imprisoned, and one of his brothers, Vakil Khan, was deputed to Kashmir as governor.

Zaman Shah's Fall

In the meantime events took place in Afghanistan itself which soon led to Zaman Shah's downfall and the ruin of the Sadozai family. The minister Wafadar Khan had offended the Afghan Sirdars by his arrogance; and the latter, driven to despair by the complete ascendency he had obtained over his royal master, formed a plot to assassinate the minister to remove the king, and to raise prince Shuja to the throne. The plot was, however, revealed to Wafadar Khan before it could be executed, and summoning the conspirators one by one to the presence of the king, dealt severe punishment to them, Most of them were killed, but some managed to escape to Persia where they induced prince Mahmud to try his luck again for the acquisition of the throne of Afghanistan and lead a force on Kandahar.

Lulled to a false sense of security after the suppression of the conspiracy against him, Zaman Shah's ambition again drew him towards the Punjab. In the year 1801-02, he marched from Kandahar at the head of a numerous army for Peshawar and the Punjab.

No sooner had Mahmud heard of Zaman Shah's movement towards Peshawar than he set out with his trusted followers to make an attempt on Kandahar. Immediately the disgruntled elements among the Sirdars and people made common cause with him and after defeating the governor of Kandahar in a battle at Bagh-i-Hurmuz, Mahmud occupied

the city turning it into a base for further operations against Zaman Shah.[2]

On learning of Mahmud's success, the king abandoned his projected enterprise in the Punjab and hurried back towards Kandahar. A battle was fought near Kalat-i-Ghilzai, which was decided in favour of Mahmud by wholesale desertions of Zaman's commanders and soldiers. The king then retired to Kabul but finding that his army and treasure were melting away, he repaired to Jalalabad where he invoked the aid of Shuja who was governor of Peshawar. Meanwhile the Qizilbash inhabitants of Kabul delivered the city into the hands of Mahmud and joined him in arms on his advance towards Jalalabad. About 36 miles from the latter city, Zaman Shah was utterly defeated. Separated from his men, he and Wafadar Khan passed the night in a ravine. Next morning they made their way to the seat of a Shinwari chief who received the fugitives with a show of respect, but secretly informed Mahmud of their capture and detention in his fort.

Zaman Shah had on his person valuable jewels, the famous Koh-i-nur diamond and the equally celebrated ruby Pokhraj. When he found that the treacherous Shinwari had made him a prisoner, the Shah resolved that neither of these gems should fall into his hands, nor into his brother's keeping. He concealed the diamond in a crack in the walls of his chamber and threw the ruby into a deep irrigation channel.

Mahmud, on learning of the detention of his brother and Wafadar Khan had them brought to Jalalabad where he had Zaman Shah blinded. Wafadar Khan and Zaman Khan Bamzai were put to death.

After the overthrow of Zaman Shah in the summer of 1801, the defeated sovereign's camp and treasure amounting to two crores of rupees fell into Mahmud's hands. He divided the money among his followers and in July 1801 was proclaimed king in Kabul and assumed the title of Shah Mahmud.

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2. The abortive campaign against Atta Muhammad Khan and the highly imprudent act at this time of dealing a severe punishment to Abdullah Khan Alokzai, directly affected the fortunes of Zaman Shah who was deserted by the powerful Alokzai clan by this foolish act.
The services of the force of 15,000 under Kifayat Khan sent to reinstate the authority there would have been invaluable in the Kings's struggle with Mahmud.

Cabool by Mountstuart Elphinstone.

Shah Mahmud

With the accession of Shah Mahmud Durrani to the throne of Afghanistan, Atta Muhammad Khan consolidated his position in Kashmir as an independent ruler. Political conditions in the home country were quite uncertain and instable and the rulers in Kabul who were engaged in an internecine warfare could not devote their attention to Kashmir.

Immediately after his assumption of the title of king of Afghanistan, Shah Mahmud had to face a rising of the powerful tribe of Ghilzais, who considered the opportunity too good to be neglected for attempting to assert their claims to supremacy in Afghanistan. The quarrel dragged on for some time, but the Ghilzais were reduced to subjection in the end. In July 1803, however, widespread riots broke out between the Sunnis and Shias. This proved of immense help to Shuja who was aspiring to the throne. The Sunnis of Kabul called him in and Shah Mahmud shut himself up in the citadel of Bala Hissar, where he ultimately surrendered.

Shuja assumed the title of Shah Shuja (13 July 1803). One of his first acts was to punish the Shinwari chief who had betrayed Zaman Shah. The Koh-i-nur and the ruby Pukhraj were also recovered.

While the affairs in Afghanistan were in the melting pot following the rising of Shah Mahmud against Zaman in 1801, Abullah Khan Alokzai, managed to escape from detention in Bala Hissar and secretly entered Kashmir, where his brother Atta Muhamad Khan had on his advice already declared his independence. The few years during which these brothers ruled in Kashmir, were years of distress for the people there, as in 1804 there was a severe earthquake which took a fearful toll of life and property. In 1805 there occurred a devastating flood. Next year the people were taken into the grip of a severely cold winter when rivers and lakes remained frozen for months.

Shah Shuja

In the summer of 1807, Shah Shuja who had moved to Peshawar despatched an expedition under Sher Muhammad Khan Mukhtar-ud-daula, to reduce Abdullah Khan to subjection, Word was sent to Abdullah Khan to accept the suzerainty of Shah Shuja peacefully, but in his pride, the offer was declined, and he made preparations to meet the invasion. By forced marches, Sher Muhammad crossing the Kishenganga, appeared on the outskirts of the Valley and defeated the

forces of Abdullah Khan near Sopore. The rebel army was scattered and Abdullah Khan entered Srinagar and deputed his son, Atta Muhammad Khan, to the reduction of the fort. The siege continued for three months which ultimately ended with the death of Abdullah Khan whose body was carried to Kabul for burial there.

Abdullah Khan Alokzai, who ruled over Kashmir for 11 years, was a just and an able administrator. He gave peace to the province and looked after the well-being of the people, But towards the end of his rule, there was a slackening in administration, due perhaps to his illness, which gave an opportunity to unscrupulous officers to harass the people.

Sher Muhammad Khan stayed in the Valley for five months to set up an efficient administration and nominating his son, Atta Muhammad Khan, as the governor of the province, retired to Afghanistan. Atta Muhammad was an enlightened ruler. He took deep and personal interest in restoring peaceful conditions in the Valley, and rehabilitating its shattered agricultural and commercial structure. He was a patron of learning and art. He used to hear and decide suits personally with scrupulous justice. He would settle all disputes of property on the spot, charging only a rupee from the parties as fees for his torch-bearer. No wonder that he was loved and respected by the people who had been placed under his charge.

Meanwhile Afghanistan was again thrown into the cauldron of civil war. In 1808 there was rebellion raised by the governor of Kabul, prince Kaisar, and Mukhtar-ud-daula, the father of Atta Muhammad Khan was killed in fighting there. The ex-king Mahmud and other princes in the Bala Hissar fort managed to escape and set up their headquarters at Farah. He then marched on Kabul which was again surrendered to him by the Qizilbash tribes. Shuja who was in Peshawar set out towards Jalalabad to give him battle.

Atta Muhammad Khan thus found the time opportune to declare his independence. But Shah Shuja set to work at collecting as many men as possible for an attempt at crushing the revolt. An expedition sent under the leadership of Akram Khan Bamzai invaded the province via Muzaffarabad. Atta Muhammad who had recruited his soldiers from among the Kashmiris and tribesmen inhabiting the hilly regions massed his army on the passes below Baramula. Akram Khan Bamzai was brave man, but his avarice, haughty and irritable disposition had rendered him unpopular. His expedition was, therefore, a complete failure. The royal troops were unable to advance and Akram Khan for fear of

being seized by his own men and delivered to the enemy, took to flight and reached Peshawar where the remnants of his forces followed him shortly after.

An experienced commander himself, Atta Muhammad Khan was not carried off his feet by this victory. He knew well that he would have to face a stronger invading force as soon as the events in Afghanistan took a steadier turn. He, therefore, began building up arms and ammunition stores and constructing fortifications on the passes leading into the Valley. He built a strong fort on the Hari Parbat hill to defend the city. To gain the goodwill of the people, he struck coins in the name of Sheikh Nur-ud-din, the patron-saint of Kashmir. The instable conditions prevailing in Afghanistan left him undisturbed from that quarter and he had thus enough time to prepare himself for the final round.

Meanwhile Mahmud Shah with the help and advice of Vazir Feteh Muhammad Khan, had driven out Shuja after several bloody battles to the Punjab where he was given asylum by Ranjit Singh. Mahmud Shah entrusted the government of Afghanistan to Vazir Fateh Muhammad Khan, and abandoned himself to self-indulgence, resigning gradually his authority to his minister. In 1812 Vazir Fateh Muhammad met Ranjit Singh and it was arranged that the latter would permit the Afghans to march by the Bhimber route to Kashmir, and aid them in taking possession of the Valley in the name of Mahmud Shah. In return for his assistance Ranjit Sigh was to receive one third of the revenue (rupees eight lakhs) annually from the Afghan governor of Kashmir.

Atta Muhammad Khan was fully apprised of these moves by his secret agents at the Afghan court. To counteract these, he sent emissaries to Shah Shuja, then living under the protection of Ranjit Singh, and invited him to Kashmir with the promise that should Fateh Khan's forces be defeated, he would be restored to the throne of Kabul. Shah Shuja was easily taken in, and travelling by unfrequented passes reached Srinagar long before Fateh Muhammad Khan could mount his invasion of Kashmir. Atta Muhammad promptly put him under detention in the fort at Hari Parbat.

Earlier, Atta Muhammad had made another diplomatic move. He had sent his trusted commander, Jahandad Khan, at the head of a force of 3,000 soldiers to occupy the Attock fort for him. And when Fateh Khan approached the Kashmir frontiers to launch his attack, his advance was halted by the resistance offered by the garrison of the fort. It was then that he approached Ranjit Singh for help.

A strong contingent of 10,000 Sikh soldiers under the command of

Diwan Mukham Chand was despatched by the Maharaja to the assistance of Vazir Fateh Muhammad Khan. On arrival at the foot of the Pir Panjal pass the combined Sikh and Pathan armies were met by the forces of Atta Muhammad Khan. A furious battle ensued but ultimately Atta Muhammad's forces were defeated and he had to retreat in disorder to Srinagar. Here he brought out Shah Shuja from detention and they together gave a stiff battle to the Vazir's army. But there was treachery and defection in the ranks of Atta Muhammad's army and both he and Shuja had to retreat behind the protecting walls of the Sher Garhi Fort.

Atta Muhammad Khan and Shuja, however, eluded capture. They secretly communicated with Diwan Mukham Chand and won him over with the promise that Shah Shuja would give the Koh-i-Nur, and Atta Muhammad Khan the fort of Attock which was in his possession, to Maharaja Ranjit Singh if they were only saved from falling into the hands of Vazir Fateh Muhammad Khan. Thereupon Diwan Mukham Chand stopped further operations against Atta Muhammad Khan. Both the latter and Shah Shuja then came over to his side. He thus struck a double bargain. As Vazir Fateh Muhammad's mission to Kashmir had proved successful he took eight lakhs of rupees, as the first instalment of tribute, from him and then left the country, taking Atta Muhammad Khan and Shah Shuja under his protection. The former surrendered the fort of Attock and the latter the famous Koh-i-Nur to Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

End of the Afghan Rule

After a stay of a few months Vazir Fateh Muhammad Khan put his brother Azim Khan in charge of Kashmir, and himself left for Peshawar. On the way he tried to win back the fort of Attock which had already been handed over to the Sikhs by the commander under orders of Atta Muhammad. Aided by his brother, Dost Muhammad Khan, he launched an attack on the Sikh garrison, but was defeated in the action fought on 13 July 1813.

In Kashmir Muhammad Azim Khan began his administration well. He appointed experienced and influential nobles like Sahaj Ram Dhar and Diwan Har Das Tikku to high administrative posts and organised his fiscal and judicial administration on more humane lines. In view of the fighting between the forces of his brother and those of Ranjit Singh at Attock, he stopped payment of the second instalment of eight lakh rupees to the Sikhs.

This enraged Ranjit Singh and in order to force Azim Khan to honour the agreement, he sent a strong Sikh contingent to invade

Kashmir. To boost up the morale of his troops he moved his own camp to Poonch to be on the spot to supervise the campaign. "Crossing the Pir Panjal range, Ranjit Singh's army marched to Hurapur, where they found numerous Afghan and Kashmiri forces collected and gave them battle. During the fight, so violent a fall of rain took place that it caused an inundation and the cold being very intense, disheartened the Punjabis so much that they were defeated; three of their high officers being killed."[3] The Sikh army retreated in disorder and being pursued by the Afghan cavalry were mercilessly cut down. Ranjit Singh on hearing this sad news hastily retired to Lahore.

Azim Khan got elated at this victory. He, however, suspected that the Sikh army had been sent by Ranjit Singh at the secret instigation of the Hindus and some Muslim nobles of Kashmir and to satisfy his thirst for revenge, put Diwan Har Das Tikku to death and persecuted the Hindus in general. The Jagirs of several Muslim nobles were resumed. To add to the miseries of the people there occurred a severe famine in the year 1814.

In Lahore Shah Shuja after having parted under pressure with the Koh-i-Nur to Ranjit Singh, eluded the vigilance of his guards, and slipped out of Ranjit Singh's hand early in 1815. Instead of following the road to Ludhiana, where the ladies of his harem had already taken refuge under the British, he made his way to the north and with the aid of the Raja of Kishtwar very nearly succeeded in an attempt at the conquest of Kashmir, but was driven back by the forces of Azim Khan and by exceptionally severe weather. After a variety of adventures, he reached Ludhiana in 1816 where he joined his family and the blind Shah Zaman.

Meanwhile conditions in Kashmir were going from bad to worse. Azim Khan's repressive measures resulted in a sharp fall in revenues, and to set the administration in order, he again called for the help of Hindu officials. He appointed Birbal Dhar, Mirza Pandit Dhar and Sukha Ram Safaya to responsible posts, entrustig to them the collection of the State revenues.

Kashmiris Invite Ranjit Singh

Unfortunately there was a failure of crops, and Birbal Dhar's collection fell short by a lakh of rupees. The Khan at once put a hundred

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3. Kanhayya Lal, *Zafar-nama-i-Ranjit Singh,* English trans. by E. Rehatsek in the *Indian Antiquary,* Vol.17, Jan.1888.p.18.

Qizilbash troops round Birbal's houses to prevent his escape to the Punjab. Two or three days later, Azim Khan enquired from Mirza Pandit Dhar, Birbal's uncle, whether Birbal was planning to escape. Mirza Pandit replied in the negative and offered to stand a surety for him and gave a written bond to the Sirdar for his custody. Back home he told Birbal that if he had actually made up his mind to escape and deliver the State of the iron yoke of the Afghans which had weighed so long upon them, by going to and inducing Maharaja Ranjit Singh to take Kashmir, he might hasten up and go the same night. Birbal, leaving his wife and daughter-in-law concealed in the house of a Muslim, Qudus Gojawari, through Wasa Kak Harkarabashi, ran away on horseback to the foot of the Devasar Pass the same night and thence, taking his son Raja Kak with him, crossed over with the help of Zulfiqar and Kamgar, the Maliks or Wardens of the Pass. Reaching Jammu he met Raja Gulab Singh, who treated him well and sent him to Lahore with a letter of introduction on his brother, Dhyan Singh. At the present time, when there are smoothly metalled roads to allow motor cars to purr and hum along pleasantly, it is difficult to imagine how much hardship and privation Birbal and his son must have suffered in marching over long and rugged hilly tracts and then over the plains. When Azim Khan came to know of the escape of Birbal Dhar he called Mirza Pandit and shouted angrily:

Birbal kuja raft? "Where has Birbal gone ?"

Mirza Pandit—*Hargah au ra hawas-i-dunya na, munda bashed ba Ganga khwahad raft warnah peshi Ranjit rafta Singhan bar tu arad.*"Should he care no more for the world he will go to the Ganges; otherwise he will go to Ranjit and bring Sikhs against you."

Sirdar — *Pas chi salah?* "What to do then ?"

Mirza Pandit — *Kushtani Mirza Pandit.* "Put Mirza Pandit to death."

Sirdar —*Bakayati-i-Birbal?* "What about the outstandings against Birbal?"

Mirza Pandit—*Ba payi Mirza Pandit !* "To be put against the name of Mirza Pandit !"

The Sirdar was pleased with this bold and manly reply and did no harm to Mirza Pandit. He then pressed Wasakak Harkarabashi to find out Birbal Dhar's wife and daughter-in-law, recovering a recurring fine of 1,000 rupees per day from him till nine days, when Telak Chand Munshi, who was the son-in-law of Birbal Dhar, got a clue of the hiding place of the two women from his wife and informed the

Sirdar of it. The Sirdar summoned them to Sher Garhi. Birbal Dhar's wife committed suicide by taking poison while being carried in a boat to the Sher Garhi in order to save herself from being dishonoured, but the other woman was seized and sent to Kabul. Wasakak Harkarabashi was slain by the Sirdar for his failure to produce them. The Maliks Zulfiqar and Kamgar also fell victims to the wrath of the Sirdar who resumed their Jagirs and destroyed their houses.

In the meantime, events in Afghanistan were taking a sinister turn. Shah Mahmud who had succeeded Shuja, with the support of Fateh Khan, the Barakzai Sirdar, ruled ineffectively at Kabul. Mahmud's full brother, known to history as Haji Firuz, ruled in Herat and the Shah had given his daughter in marriage to Firuz's son.

Ere long Fateh Khan and Muhammad thought it desirable to evict Haji Firuz, and the royal troops were set in motion under the leadership of Fateh Khan. The citadel of Herat came easily under the possession of Fateh Khan, but his younger brother, Dost Muhammad, committed an act of gross insult to the daughter-in-law of Firuz, no less a person than the daughter of Shah Mahmud. A chorus of indignation followed from all of any standing and Dost Muhammad fled to Kashmir. The vindictive Sadozais, however, must need have revenge, and Prince Kamran, son of Shah Mahmud seized Fateh Khan on the pretext that he was responsible for this insult, and with his own hands put out the Vazir's eyes with a dagger. This cruel deed at once turned the whole of Barakzai tribe and influence against the Shah, and civil war broke out.

Vazir Fateh Khan sent word to his brother, Azim Khan, to return to Kabul at this critical Juncture, and accordingly Azim despatched his harem, and treasure worth more than a crore of rupees, under the charge of Sahaj Ram Dhar, to Kabul in advance of his own departure a month later in 1819, leaving his younger brother, Jabbar Khan to rule over Kashmir.

Jabbar Khan, destined to be the last Afghan governor, was a simple and just man and would probably have proved a successful ruler, had not the political upheavals in Afghanistan and the Punjab, abruptly terminated his rule after only four months.

Jabbar Khan was once told by someone that it was a common notion among the Pandits that snow falls invariably on the *Shivaratri* night (13th of the dark fortnight of Phalguna). To test this, he ordered that the Pandits be not allowed to observe this festival in Phalguna (February — March) but in Asarh (June — July). Accordingly it had to be observed on the

corresponding night in the latter month. It so happened that even on this night flakes of snow, preceded by a heavy rainfall which had rendered the atmosphere very cold, fell. The Kashmiri bard then, mocking at him, sang:

Wuchhton yih Jabbar, Jandah,
Haras tih karun wandah.
Look at Jabbar, the wretch,
Even Har he turned into winter.

In the meantime that pioneer of undaunted perseverence, Birbal Dhar, was inducing Maharaja Ranjit Singh to take Kashmir, and the people in Kashmir had their wistful eyes turned towards the Sikhs that they might come and liberate them from the tyrannies of the Afghans. *Deva yiyih Sikha raj tarit Kyah* — (would that the rule of the Sikhs would cross over to us) — was then the popular lullaby of the mother to set her child to sleep. When it became known that Sirdar Azim Khan had left Kashmir, Birbal Dhar undertook the responsibility of paying any amount of loss incurred by the Maharaja if his troops failed in the invasion of Kashmir, keeping his son, Raja Kak, as a hostage for the security of the performance of his engagement. The Maharaja then sent over 30,000 troops in charge of Birbal Dhar to invade Kashmir. The troops were commanded by Raja Gulab Singh, Diwan Chand Misr, Sirdar Hari Singh, Jwala Singh Padania, Hukum Singh and others. A fierce battle ensued at the top of the Pir Panjal in which the Afghans were defeated. Another battle was fought on the plateau of Shopyan and in this Jabbar Khan was wounded and his troops routed. Jabbar Khan hastily fled to Afghanistan and Kashmir fell into the hands of the Sikhs. On receipt of the news of the victory of his troops in Kashmir, Maharaja Ranjit Singh bestowed robes of honour and other favours on Raja Kak Dhar and other nobles; Lahore was illuminated for three days.

Thus Kashmir, after a long period of about five centuries, passed again from the rule of the Muslim to that of the Hindu kings.

Muslim Rule — An Appraisal

And there is nothing surprising about it. The tyrannical and rapacious rule of the Afghans could lead only to one result, the end of their authority in Kashmir. The people, irrespective of the religion they professed, were determined to throw off their yoke, and rebellion and revolution were in the air. But without the aid of a powerful army it

was not possible to achieve the objective. Kashmir had been so much trodden down that the later Afghan governors could hold the province with only a small number of Pathan forces. The invitation to Ranjit Singh to come to Kashmir's rescue was dictated by the helpless condition of the people. How and why they were reduced to this plight may be explained by other and deeper causes of the decline and ultimate end of the Muslim rule in Kashmir.

Islam entered the Valley not as a result of foreign invasion, but by a *coup d'etat* from within the country. Its influence and teachings had penetrated into the Valley long before a Muslim king ascended the throne, being carried thither by Islamic missionaries and military adventurers. Happily for the new religion it found a fertile soil there to grow and expand in. The people had been groaning under the misrule of the later Hindu rulers, when trade languished and agriculture was at a standstill.

The shackles of caste had already been broken by the teachings of Buddhism and the general mass of people did not, therefore, find it difficult to embrace the new faith as preached by the Sufi dervishes who projected its social and religious humanism.

The Kashmiris were not, therefore, averse to the rule of Shah Mir and his immediate successors who, to their great relief, gave them a clean administration under which trade revived, agriculture flourished, the burden of taxation was lightened and life and property were rendered secure. In fact under Sultan Shihab-ud-din, the martial traditions of the imperial Karkotas were revived and Kashmir was again respected and feared by the rulers of adjacent territories. These early Sultans did not interfere with the religious beliefs of the people, and in practice continued to stick to the customs and ceremonies of the Hindus. But with the influx of a large number of orthodox Sayyids and doctors of Islamic Law from Persia and Central Asia, a few Sultans like Sikandar came under the influence of their preachings, and adopted impolitic practices like the persecution of the Brahmins. Sikandars's forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam and destruction of their temples resulted in a massive change in the composition of the population of the Valley which continues till even today. This explains the large population of Muslims and a small number of Hindus living in Kashmir. It weakened the rule of the Shah Mir Sultans considerably. It was, however, Sultan Zain-ul-abidin who reversed this policy and under his tolerant and enlightened rule, Kashmir acquired not only power and prestige, but rose to great heights in art and culture. This resulted in a fresh renaissance which with the fusion of old and new elements produced a new type of architecture and music, enriched the

Kashmiri language, and above all gave birth to the great Order of the Rishis of Kashmir, who taught, by example and precept, a tolerant outlook on life and Nature. The impact of the Arabic and Persian cultures which followed the wholesale adoption of Islam in Kashmir, produced profound and far-reaching effect on diet, dress, marriage and morals, art and literature, which is discernible among people even today. But though the new values were assimilated quickly, the past was not eliminated; it was allowed to blend with the new. Some of the early Sultans worshipped even idols; Sanskrit continued to be patronised, and also to be the court language for at least two centuries after the advent of Muslim rule. "The result was the emergence of a society which, though differing from the old, was rooted in Indo-Kashmir traditions. This is evident from a study of the Kashmiri language and literature, religious beliefs and social life."[4]

But the good work achieved by the early Sultans did not continue to grow further under their successors. The society being feudal, the Sultans, like most kings, desired self-aggrandisement. This was opposed actively by the feudal nobility who played a similar role under the Hindu Rajas. The inevitable strife followed, helped by the fratricidal wars among the sons of several rulers, there being no definite custom or law governing the succession to the throne. Kashmir thus became again an arena for the contending kings and pretenders to fight their battles in. Again the unfortunate people had to suffer from heavy taxation, instable administration and political chaos, with the consequent destruction of the entire economy of the kingdom.

The chronic stampede for power among the nobles and the warring princes encouraged religious feuds between the Shias and Sunnis. Frequently the Hindus were also dragged into the vortex. This further weakened the kingdom. The expanding empire of the Mughals, therefore, did not find it difficult to bring Kashmir under its hegemony. Kashmir lost its independent status and became a province of the great Mughal empire of India.

The Mughals no doubt ushered in an era of peace and prosperity and broke the isolation of the Valley which subjected it to a further impact of powerful influences from the rest of the country. But by the time their empire entered its period of decline and ultimate fall, Kashmiris had lost their political initiative and were left helpless with their martial spirit crushed out of them. The Kashmiri ruling families of Chaks, Magrey and

4. Hassan, op, cit., p.274.

Dars, had been replaced by Mughal officers of the local disbanded army. No wonder the Valley fell easily into the hands of the Afghan king, Ahmad Shah Abdali, there being no person or institution powerful enough to take over the responsibilities of administration and authority as was the case in other provinces. The Kashmiris had thus to suffer inhuman cruelties whose evil effect continued to sap their vitality for a long time after.

But though persecuted and treated as chaff by many an unscrupulous king and conqueror, the Kashmiris stuck fast to their humanistic principles, and did not fall a prey to religious intolerance and narrowminded bigotry. The flame of learning and culture was assiduously kept alight by several scholars and savants. Even in the darkest days of political instability, Kashmir did not cease to bring forth literary gems in Sanskrit, Persian and Kashmiri languages. Nor did their deft fingers stop to enrich the world of art with their beautiful architecture, their shawls, exquisite wood carvings, colourful pieces in papiermache and numerous other handicrafts.

14

A SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY

The political boundaries of Kashmir; its administrative system — both civil and military — remained unaltered for at least two centuries after the accession of Shah Mir to the throne. It was only towards the middle of the Sultanate that we find some changes appearing in the political, social and administrative institutions of the kingdom.

While studying the economic and social structure prevailing in medieval Kashmir, one is again confronted with the paucity of material on the subject, particularly about the period covered by the rule of the Sultans. There is, however, better and more detailed data available on the Mughal period, but the conditions prevailing under the Afghans are shrouded in darkness, as there is scanty material available on the brief period of their rule.

Political Geography

The political geography of Kashmir did not undergo any material change from that obtaining during the time of later Hindu rulers. The hill states surrounding the Valley maintained their independent status, being occasionally reduced to vassalage during the time of stronger rulers. As such we have to concentrate on the study of the social and economic conditions of the people living in the Valley proper alone.

The political relations between the Valley and the neighbouring hill states, however, underwent a definite change during the Mughal period, when Kashmir became one of the Subhas of the vast empire. But even with their unlimited resources and military might, the Mughals were not able to bring the several rajas of the hill states of Jammu under complete subjugation, nor were Ladakh and Baltistan definitely incorporated in the empire. The political isolation of the surrounding territories hampered the free economic intercourse among the inhabitants of these

regions and of the Valley.

The territory of Lohara or modern Poonch, Rajauri and the Jhelum valley below Baramula, had formed a part of the Kashmir kingdom and had been administered directly by the later Hindu kings. With the advent of Muslim rule, these areas became independent, and various expeditions were despatched by powerful Sultans like Shihab-ud-din, Qutb-ud-din and Zain-ul-abidin to secure the submission of the chiefs of these principalities. But with the outbreak of internecine wars in the Valley, these hill tribes reverted to an independent status. Several times in fact these petty chiefs played a prominent part in fomenting trouble in the Valley by extending help to one party against the other: several times the various pretenders to the throne of Kashmir recruited their armies from the inhabitants of these regions.

During the Afghan rule in the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, the Khakha and Bomba tribes of the Jhelum valley below Baramula and of the Kishenganga valley established their own independent chiefships and led marauding expeditions into the northern districts of the Valley. It was with great difficulty that the governors were able to push them back to their hilly homes.

Relations with principalities lying to the east, south and west of the Valley were on a different footing. After the death of Sikandar, the frontier area of Ladakh reverted to an independent status. So was the case with Kishtwar and Baltistan. But various expeditions sent to these territories by powerful Sultans like Zain-ul-abidin, resulted in these territories becoming tributary to the Kashmir kingdom. Their chiefs looked upon the Sultan as their suzerain to whom they had sometimes to give their daughters in marriage. "In return for their undertaking to supply troops in case of war, they enjoyed complete freedom in their administration. During the reigns of weak Sultans, the chiefs invariably asserted their independence and withheld payment of tribute."[1]

The political isolation of Kashmir extending for centuries was, however, broken by the Mughal conquest of the Valley in 1586. Before that Kashmir was an independent kingdom, self-sufficient to a great extent and cut off from the world by the snowy mountain walls. During the Mughal period improved road communications were established and *serais* were built for travellers. Political unity with the rest of the country and the visits of the Mughal emperors made Kashmir part and parcel of India. This had great economic consequences.

1. Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, p.209

"Akbar's conquest", writes Dr Stein, "marks the commencement of modern history of Kashmir....... Though the conservative instinct of the population was bound to maintain much of the old tradition and customs, yet the close connection with a great empire and the free intercourse with other territories subject to it necessarily transformed in many ways the political and economic situation of the country."[2]

Under the brief Afghan rule also, Kashmir's political destiny was linked with that of the kings of the Durrani dynasty of Kabul. Although the people of Kashmir were too much engrossed in their own troubles, and had no inclination or incentive to come closer to the ruling class and their country, yet the frequent *corvee* levied on them to carry the baggage and supplies for the invading or defending armies took them out of the secluded Valley to the plains of the Punjab and the hilly tracts of Afghanistan. Moreover, the recurring famines and political tyrannies also forced a large proportion of the population out of Kashmir to settle in various towns and cities in the rest of India. This too produced economic consequences of a far-reaching character.

Towns and Cities

Kashimiris are not migratory by nature and, therefore, the majority of villages and hamlets, towns and cities, have been in existence at the places they stand on today. Several new towns and cities were founded by some of the Sultans, and some by the Mughal emperors too.

Sultan Jamshed (1342-43) founded the town of Jamnagar in the Advin Pargana. Sultan Alau-ud-din (1342-54) founded the town of Alaudinpura near Srinagar which he beautified with spacious buildings and bazaars. Qutb-ud-din founded a small town adjacent to the then city of Srinagar. Qutbdinpura, as the new town came to be known, was the seat of a college and *Khanqah* or hospice. Sultan Sikandar, his son, is recorded to have similarly founded a town on the eastern bank of the Jhelum, which was called Sikandarpura and is now known as Nauhatta. Modern Shadipur near the confluence of the Jhelum and the Sindh rivers, owes its existence to Sultan Shihab-ud-din. Sultan Zain-ul-abidin, besides building numerous canals, bridges and gardens also founded several towns and villages, notably Zainagir near the Wular lake, Zainakot and Zainapura.

During the Mughal period also we learn of several cities and towns having been founded by Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jehan. Akbar built

2. Intro.*Rajatarangini*, p.131

his city round the Hari Parbat hill, and fortified it with a huge bastioned wall, calling it Nagar Nagar. There were several buildings and gardens of enormous size and beautiful design put up in the new city. Of particular notice was the palace known as Jarogh-i-Shahi and the gardens surrounding it. Though we have no direct evidence of any city being founded by some of the emperors, the importance which they gave to the towns and cities of their liking may well be said to have actually given them their existence. Thus Verinag acquired the status of a city under Jehangir who loved the spot and spent most of his time there during his frequent sojourns in Kashmir.

We have, however, no mention of the founding of cities and towns by the Afghans, except, perhaps, one by Amir Khan Jawansher.

Throughout the medieval period, Srinagar, as usual, continued to be the seat of government. Kota Rani made Andarkot near Sumbal, ten miles below Srinagar, as her capital and so did Sultan Alau-ud-din. Being protected by the waters of the Wular which surrounded the town, the fortified city of Andarkot offered an excellent site for putting up defence against an enemy.

There were other important towns as well. At the foot of the Pir Panjal pass on the route from the Punjab to Kashmir, Hirapur near Shopyan acquired importance as the first city of note in the Valley. Besides being the centre of fruit and grain trade, it was the scene of numerous bloody battles which decided the fate of several kings and ruling dynasties. A similar importance was attached to Baramula, the chief city at the entrance to the Valley from the Jhelum valley and Tosamaidan passes. Bijbihara and Anantnag were in a prosperous condition throughout the medieval times. Pampore, Khoihama and Paraspur were also towns of importance.

The Number of People

It is not possible to give exact figures of the number of people inhabiting the Valley during the medieval period, as there is hardly any reference to a census having been taken at any time. We are told by some of the chroniclers that the Valley was thickly populated and judging from the number of deserted villages existing till recent times and also extensive irrigation canals, wells and tanks, and the cultivation of land on seemingly inaccessible parts of mountains round about the Valley, the statement is not far from the truth. The *Zafar-nama*, for instance, mentions that the land was thickly populated, [3] and so does

3. Sharaf-ud-din Yazdi, *Zafar-nama*, ii,177-8.

Abul Fazal speak of the country's "numerous population."[4]

In the Mughal period, however, it appears that a rough census of the Valley was conducted by Saif Khan in or about 1670 AD. According to it there were 1,243,033 souls in Kashmir including 90,400 infantry and 4,812 cavalry.[5] Excepting this there is practically no record of the population of the country. Travellers like Bernier do not even mention whether the population was more or less dense than in other parts of India. We can however, to quote Moreland, "gauge the density of population from the land revenue that was realized" from different parts of the Valley.[6] Military garrisons cannot throw any light on the population statistics because being a frontier province and inhabited by warlike people like the Chaks, Kashmir would have required greater military strength than other provinces in the rest of India. We have, therefore, to measure the density of population from the revenue returns only. For this we have happily some definite records pertaining to the Mughal period.

From the revenue statistics of Abul Fazal, it it found that in the Maraz district the revenue realised was more than in the Kamraz district. Again in Maraz, Vihi Pargana yielded more than either Icch or Brang Parganas. Wular Pargana yielded more than either Phak, Kuther or Mattan. In the Parganas south-east of Srinagar, Adwin yielded the largest amount of revenue, Nagam came next and Verinag last of all . In the Kamraz district, Krohen yielded the largest revenue with Bangil following close. Inderkot came last of all.[7] It may be mentioned here that the area covered by the various Parganas was almost equal. We, therefore, come to the following conclusions:

(i) Maraz district was more populous than Kamraz;

(ii) In the Maraz district, Krohen and Bangil Parganas were comparatively denser in population than the rest of the Parganas; and

(iii) in the Kamraz district, Krohen and Bangil Parganas were more populous than any of the present time.

It may be noted that with slight modifications these results are true of the population of Kashmir even at the present time.

Abul Fazal, Jehangir and Bernier record that Kashmir was full of

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4. *Aini-i-Akbari*, ii 353.
5. *Tarikh-i-Hasan*, MSS.
6. *India at the Death of Akbar*.
7. *Ain-i-Akbari*, translated by Jarret.

fields of green crops and that little of the land was left uncultivated. On the other hand, there is no record to show that grain was exported to places in the rest of India. This shows that the population of Kashmir was dense to the full productive capacity of the Valley. Again, Abul Fazal says: "Notwithstanding its numerous population and the scantiness of the means of subsistence, thieving and begging are rare".[8] The remark indicates that the population of the Valley was denser than many parts in the rest of India. Secondly, we may infer that the Valley must have been overpopulated because notwithstanding the thorough cultivation of land and the absence of exports of grain, "the means of subsistence were scanty." This conclusion is also supported by the remark of Bernier about Aurangzeb's visit to the Valley. "That scarcity of provisions may not be produced in the kingdom of Kashmir, the king will be followed by a very limited number of individuals".[9] The population figures of the Valley seem to have undergone a radical change with the advent of Afghan rule. Political uncertainty coupled with natural calamities like famines and floods resulted in wholesale emigration and death. Though there are no records to show the exact number of people who continued to inhabit the Valley during troublous times, we get a glimpse of it from the diaries of some European travellers who visited the Valley immediately after the end of the Afghan rule. Moorcraft records that whereas the population of the city of Srinagar, although much diminished, was very numerous, yet at the same time the villages and small towns were deserted, people having either migrated to the capital where there was greater safety or to the plains of India.

This is contrary to the conditions prevailing in the time of the Sultans and Mughals when the population was scattered over in villages and only a small portions of it lived in towns. The number of villages has been variously estimated. "Masudi (*d*.956) says that the number of villages in the Valley stood between 60,000 to 70,000. According to Sharaf-ud-din Yazdi, in the whole province — plains and mountains together — there were 100,000 villages. The number of villages in the *Lokaprakasa* is placed at 66,063. This is also the oral tradition of the Brahmans throughout the Valley. Jonaraja also gives the figure as 60,000. Dimashqi (*d*.1327) speaks of inner and outer Kashmir, the former containing 70,000 villages and the latter more than100,000. We can thus safely say that there were between 60,000 and 70,000 villages in Kashmir during the period of the Sultans. The same was

8. Ibid.
9. *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, Constable and Smith's edition.

the number under early Mughal rulers. The decline in the number of villages and consequently of the population itself began from the later Mughal or Afghan period".[10]

The Classes of Population

The Muslim element entered into Kashmir during the first quarter of the 14th century. Formerly, as noted in Chapter 6, the population consisted of either Hindu, Buddhist, or Jain. With the influx of Muslim divines and philosophers from Persia and Central Asia into the Valley during the 14th century and after, a material change was brought about in the composition of the population. But though there was a close intercourse between the new converts to Islam and the theologians from foreign countries, links with the past continued to be as strong as ever, for the Kashmiris were tenaciously clinging to old customs and ceremonies. With the exception of Brahmins, most of the people belonging to all other castes slowly embraced Islam. As a result there remained among Hindus only one class, namely, the Brahmins, who continued to follow their traditional calling of government service throughout the period of the Sultanate. The Brahmins were further divided, in the course of time, into two sub-castes of Karkuns and Bhashya-bhatts. Those who studied Persian and entered government service from the time of Zain-ul-abidin onwards, were called Karkuns, but those who clung to their old traditions were known as Bhashya-bhatts.

Many of the converts to Islam, however, continued to bear their old surnames. Kauls, Bhatts, Mantus, Ganais, Rainas and Pandits, were converts from the Brahmin caste, whereas Dars, Magreys, Rathors, Thakors, Nayaks, Lons, Chaks came from that of the Kshatriyas. "They retained their old caste rules and even their functions, and inter-marriages between the different groups were exceptions rather than the rule".[11]

Notwithstanding the conversion of several castes and classes among the Hindus to Islam, the social structure as prevalent during the time of the later Hindu kings continued to remain intact. During the time of the early Sultans the Damaras who played such a prominent role in the politics of the kingdom, continued to flourish, though under a different religious and social label. The activities of Magreys, Rainas, Chaks and Dars bear close resemblance to those of the feudal lords of the later Hindu period.

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10. Mohibbul Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, p. 252.
11. Ibid.,p.226.

At the head of the social structure stood the Sultan and his family. Next came the feudal nobles who held titles, privileges and Jagirs which were hereditary. Most of these nobles were men of culture and wealth and patronised learned poets, artists and saints at their seats. There is evidence of their building religious edifices and pleasure houses and gardens. But most of their time, energy and wealth were frittered away in political intrigues against one another, the king, or a pretender to the throne. This scramble for power among the barons led to untold sufferings for the people.

There entered another important element into Kashmir during the rule of the Sultans — the Sayyids and nobles from Persia and Central Asia who were received with respect at court. They were granted Jagirs and subsidies and enjoyed privileges and power. This led to a sharp cleavage among the two sections of the nobility — the indigenous and the foreign — which resulted in frequent civil wars and family feuds. It was not till nearly the end of the Sultanate that these foreign elements were finally driven out of the Valley by the Kashmiris.

The Sultans and the nobles entered into matrimonial relations among themselves. From political considerations the Sultans also entered into matrimonial alliances with the Rajas of Jammu, Kishtwar, Rajauri, Pakhli and Sind. Although birth was an important factor determining the social status during the medieval period, we have instances where individuals of humble and poor parentage rose by dint of hard work and ability to a high rank.

Side by side with the feudal landlordism, there grew up the religious classes among the Muslim population. The most respected and influential among these classes were the Ulama, who as doctors of Islamic Law and interpreters of religious dogma, were universally respected by the followers of Islam. They functioned as Qazis, Muftis and Sheikh-ul-Islam. Most of the Ulama came from Persia and Central Asia, but soon Kashmiri scholars acquired sufficient mastery over the subject to be able to perform the duties of these offices. Many, after going through a course in Kashmir, went for higher studies at the learned universities of Persia and Central Asia. In fact one of the Kashmiri Ulama became the Supreme Judge or Qazi at the court of Aurangzeb.

Next to the Ulama were the Sayyids who being the descendants of the line of the Prophet, were respected by the kings and their Muslim subjects. They were granted Jagirs and other privileges. Most of them engaged themselves in conducting schools and other cultural

institutions, but some like the Baihaqi Sayyids took to politics and created a host of rivals among the Kashmiri nobles.

It is a unique characteristic of the spread of Islam in Kashmir that the new religion was practised and preached initially by Sufis and saints who led a pious and noble life and mixing freely with the general mass of people, familiarised them with the humanistic teachings of Islam. The Sufis thus formed a very influential and respected class. It was from among these Sufis that there emerged the Order of the Rishis, founded originally by Sheikh Nur-ud-din Rishi alias Nand Rishi. They built their hospice or *Khanqah,* presided over its management and gave solace and help to people in distress. Though leading lives of self abnegation, they took active interest in the affairs of the community, and often raised their voice against oppression and injustice.

By the time the Mughals took over Kashmir, the Islamic element in the population had increased considerably. According to *Ain-i-Akbari,* the Hindus were known by the name of Bhatts and they were chiefly concentrated at Srinagar, Vihi, Mattan, Icch, Nagam, Inderkot, Pattan and Telgam. The Muslims, majority of whom were Sunnis, were present in all the Paraganas in varying numbers, but were mainly found at Dacchinpara, Zainagir, and Pattan. There were among them many castes such as Khamash, Shawl, Sihar, Bakre, Sansi, Duni and Chaks. There were hill tribes like Thakor and Nayak.

About the economic division of the population, very little is known. The high civil and military official comprised the upper class. There were very few manufacturers and big entrepreneurs, as many of the principal productive trades were State monopolies. Moreland says that there seems to have been no middle class in India during the Mughal period. But in Kashmir, the Pandits who were employed in various State departments naturally represented that class. There was besides a class of traders and shopkeepers who can also be counted among the middle class population of medieval Kashmir. The lower class comprised unskilled labourers, shawl weavers, boatmen, gardeners and other groups performing menial jobs. The Chandalas, Dombas and Chamars stood at the lowest rung of the social ladder. They acted as watchmen and performed menial jobs like the removal of dead bodies of persons executed, or killed in war.[12] They were generally landless agricultural labourers and sometimes enlisted in the army.[13] The shepherds of the Valley formed a distinct class and married with the

12. Srivara. pp. 192,274
13. Jonaraja.,95; Srivara.,284,313.

Galwans or horse-trainers. "Slavery, which played such an important part in the social and political life of medieval Islam, did not exist on any large scale in Kashmir. It is true that some of the Sultans employed slaves among whom a few rose to occupy high positions in the State; but there is no evidence in the Chronicles to suggest that the merchants and nobles kept slaves. The institution of slavery was, in fact, looked upon with adhorence by the Kashmiris."[14]

Since the time of Shams-ud-din Iraqi's visit to Kashmir in 1492, the Shia sect of the Muslims came into being and the followers of this faith grew both in number and influence. This had deep but sad influence on the course of the political history of Kashmir for centuries after. Repeated outbreaks of rioting between the Shias and Sunnis and the means adopted by several kings and nobles of either sect to effect the destruction of the other, proved disastrous for the economy of the kingdom, and weakening it considerably, turned it into an inviting prey for several ambitious invaders to attempt its conquest.

Administration

The administrative structure in Kashmir did not undergo any revolutionary change at the advent of Muslim rule. The system prevalent under the rule of the later Hindu kings continued to be in force for a considerable time. Sanskrit as usual was the court language and the traditional civil servants, the Brahmins continued in their office undisturbed.

It was as a result of the influx of Sayyids and Islamic missionaries from Persia and Central Asia during the reigns of Qutb-ud-din and his successors that the Muslim administrative system together with its Arabic and Persian designations of offices came into vogue.

The Sultan, like his predecessor the Hindu Raja, was an autocrat. His authority was supreme. He was the lawgiver as well as the interpreter of laws, the head of the executive authority and the supreme commander of the royal forces. He could declare war as well as make peace. He was the highest court of appeal and had the power of life and death over his subjects.

The Sultan was, however, assisted in the performance of his kingly duties by a Council of Ministers. They were consulted on all important matters of policy and were entrusted with portfolios to conduct the day-to-day administration of the kingdom. As his ministers were invariably

14. Mohibbul Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans,* p. 227.

chosen from the powerful landed aristocracy, it prevented his becoming a despot. Except their being a check on the autocratic authority of the Sultan, the ministers were often a source of misery for the people, their rivalries and scramble for power leading to frequent internecine wars. Their influence and power in their fiefs naturally prevented the establishment of a strong and stable centralised government. The conditions created by their activities resembled closely those existing under the later Hindu Rajas.

Like them also the Sultans too coined titles and distinguishing marks for themselves. Besides being known as the Sultans, they adopted the titles of *Shah* and *Padshah*. Some of them gave to themselves the title like Humayun, Nasir-ud-Din Padshah, Ghazi, etc. They held elaborate and pompous assemblies and ascended a gorgeously decorated throne. They wore a royal diadem and were fanned with *chawries*. They had gorgeous regal robes and minted coins in their own names with a distinctive legend. To give a religious sanction to their power and authority, they had their names recited in the *Khutba* or sermon before the Friday prayers, which was originally the privilege and prerogative of only the Caliphs.

The office of prime minister who wielded wide and exclusive powers and was known as Sarvadhikara under the Hindu rulers, continued to be maintained by the early Sultans. The designation was altered probably in the time of Zain-ul-abidin to that of Wazir. Like his predecessor, the Sarvadhikara, the Wazir's position was 'above anybody' and he was directly chosen by the Sultan. He dictated the policy of the State and if the king was weak or ineffective, it was he who exercised the supreme power of the government.

Not only was the Wazir the head of the civil administration, he also led the armed forces. Sultan Sikandar's Wazir, Suhabhatta, was not only the head of the civil administration, but his commander-in-chief as well. But the combination of the functions of the Wazir with those of the supreme commander of the forces was not always essential. During the time of Shihab-ud-din, for example, Udayasri was both the Wazir and finance minister, but the command of the forces was in the hands of Damara Chandra and Laula. It was only when the rivalries among feudal lords for the capture of the post of Wazir became common during the reigns of the later Sultans that the Wazir also held the command of the force to uphold his supremacy and power. Actually the Chaks after their appointment to the post used their power to depose the Sultan and usurp the throne for themselves.

The Wazir and other ministers were assigned Jagirs in lieu of their services. Whether in addition to this they received salaries also is not, however, ascertainable from the scanty records available.

During the time of the later Sultans another important ministerial post came into existence, that of the finance minister or Diwan-i-kul. The Diwan-i-kul was in charge of collecting revenues from land and other taxes and to look after the expenditure of the State revenues.

The powers of the Purohita or the head of the Ecclesiastical Department had, during the time of the later Hindu Rajas, declined considerably, But with the accession of Muslim kings to the throne, the Sheikh-ul-Islam, as the post came to be designated, acquired great power and influence. The Sheikh-ul-Islam was not only responsible for the smooth working of the religious institutions and practices in the land, he was also the supreme judge, performed the coronation ceremony of a new Sultan, and was his constant adviser on legal and religious matters. Sometimes he issued political decrees in favour of or against a claimant to the throne or an invader. This naturally carried great weight with masses. In 1532, for example, when Mirza Haider Dughlat invaded Kashmir, the Sheikh-ul-Islam issued as injunction to fight the invader, which produced the desired effect of galvanising the nobles and masses to action.

The post of Sheikh-ul-Islam came into being during the reign of Sultan Sikandar and seems to have been continued during the Sultanate and the Mughal rule. Under the Chaks, the duties of the Sheikh-ul-Islam were taken over by the Qazi of Srinagar, also called Qazi-ul-Quzat.

The administration of justice was in the hands of the Qazi, whose office was first created in Kashmir by Sultan Sikandar. During the Chak period he became the head of the Ecclesiastical Department as well and led the prayers, looked after religious endowments and gave advice to the Sultan on religious matters, besides acting as the chief civil judge. He was assisted by a Mufti who gave rulings on cases according to the Hanafite law. A subordinate judicial officer known as Mir Adl functioned in every district to decide simple property suits, the more complicated ones being referred to the Qazi.

Justice was also administered by the Sultan and the Wazir personally in court which was open to all. Hassan Shah Chak, however, had fixed Mondays to hear law suits. The decision of all civil suits was either according to the *Shar'a* or Islamic law or the personal law of the contending parties. Punishments in criminal cases were awarded differently by different kings. Zain-ul-abidin, for instance did not

favour the award of capital punishment even for murder, nor mutilation in the case of theft or robbery. Mutilation as a form of punishment was introduced by Ghazi Shah Chak but was later abolished by Ali Shah.

Other administrative posts during the Sultanate also conformed to the pattern set in the Hindu period, their designations being only changed to Persian. For example, the *Ganjvara* or the treasurer was designated as Khazanchi or Khazana-dar, the *Nagaradhipa* as Kotwal and Muhtasib. The Kotwal was the police officer in charge of a town and had to look after the morals of the citizens. He had to maintain law and order and protect the citizens from thieves and robbers. To discharge his duties efficiently he had a police force under him. The Muhtasib besides performing the duties akin to those of the Kotwal was also responsible for collection of revenues, and had to see that the people in general observed the rules of religious practices. Those who were in default had to be produced before the Qazi who alone was empowered to award punishment to the culprit.

As during the Hindu period the Sultans and the Mughals maintained a Central Record Department where all documents pertaining to sale and purchase of property, agreements, contracts and judicial and revenue records were preserved. Besides Srinagar there was a records office at Sopore, the capital of Kamraj. But during the reign of Zain-ul-abidin all the previous records were destroyed.[15]

There were in addition to the above, several minor offices directly under the Sultan. Every department had a secretary called Dabir. An important and powerful office was that of the crown-prince. There were also the office of the court astrologer and the court physician, both of whom enjoyed the Sultan's confidence.[16] There was also a separate department of music with an officer at its head. The *Purohiṭa* or the Brahmin priest was an important person under the early Shah Mir Sultans, but later his importance declined, most of his functions being taken over by the Sheikh-ul-Islam.[17]

Administrative Divisions

The traditional division of the Valley into two districts of Maraj and Kamraj already described continued to be maintained during the medieval times. The two districts were under the charge of *mandalesa*

15. Srivara., pp. 155-56.
16. Jonaraja. p. 88.
17. Mohibbul-Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, p.206.

during the Hindu period, whose designation was changed to that of Hakim under the Sultans and the Mughals. The office of Hakim was generally filled by the royal princes or persons enjoying the confidence of the Sultan. Under the later Sultans when they degenerated into mere puppets in the hands of their ministers, the Valley was divided among three or four feudal lords who were responsible for the administration of their respective fiefs. But the general supervision of the kingdom continued to be vested in the Wazir who ruled in the name of the puppet Sultan.

The Hakim was required to maintain law and order in his district, collect revenue and dispense justice. Each district was sub-divided into several Parganas, under the charge of an officer variously designated as Tahsildar, Kotwal or Shaqdar. We have no record of the exact number of Parganas (Visayas under the Hindus) during the reign of Zain-ul-abidin, but according to *Lokaprakasa* there were 27. It is not certain which time it refers to. Under Muhammad Shah, however, the number of Parganas was 27, but under Mirza Haider Dughlat it increased to 40. According to Abul Fazal, the number was 38 during Asaf Khan's governorship, but Qazi Ali's settlement earlier showed the number as 41.Probably the latter was the number which existed during the rule of the Chaks.

Each Pargana had a number of villages which formed the unit of administration. The village had an accountant or *patwari*. For maintaining law and order there was a police officer called Sarhang-Zada. Under him were the Dombas who swept the houses during the day and kept watch in the night. There is no mention of the system of the village panchayat in the Chronicles.

The Sultans were particular in keeping themselves informed of the doings of their subjects, the ministers and officials, through a network of spies. Sometimes they went about incognito to learn of the condition of the people. The spies were recruited from all classes, from nobles to prostitutes. Similarly, queens and nobles had their own agents to keep them informed of the moves and counter-moves of their rivals at court.[18]

During the Mughal period the administrative set-up in Kashmir underwent a drastic change. By virtue of its being one of the Subhas of the Mughal empire, the form of administration was brought in line with that prevailing in the rest of the country. The Mughal administration in India was carried on either as *kacha* or *pucka*. *Kacha* administration was one in which the governor (called Subhedar) received pay from the imperial exchequer and submitted the net revenue to the same. *Pucka*

18. Jonaraja., p. 97; Sriv., p. 101; Hassan, f. 1229; Nasib, ff, 205b Sqq.

administration meant one in which a favourite of the emperor was appointed the governor, the administration and collection of revenue from the subha being left entirely in his hands.

But in Kashmir the administration was a *kacha* one. This is amply proved by the appointment of successive governors. The *pucka* form was, moreover, in vogue chiefly in South India.

The Subha of Kashmir had a varying number of *sarkars* in the Mughal period. Each of these was in charge of a Kotwal. He had to look after the personal security of the people and also to conduct civic duties like sanitation, public works,etc.

The security of the city or towns people was to some extent assured on account of the presence of the Kotwal and his police force and the Mansebdar (who was in charge of a *sarkar*) who both had executive and judicial powers. But there is no doubt that many of them took undue advantage of their authority. As Moreland remarks, "Bribery was almost universal in India at this time."

The administration of justice under the Mughals was wholly in the hands of the Subhedar who functioned on behalf of the emperor as the supreme judicial authority in his province. He delegated these functions to the Mansebdar of each district and Pargana. Kashmiris were, however, fortunate in being able to present their disputes and complaints to the emperors personally when they visited the Valley on holiday. This proved an effective check on the authority of the governor and his subordinate staff.

Under the Afghans, the administrative machinery of the Mughals was allowed to function intact. But it was mostly the personal whims of the governor which ruled supreme. The revenue of the province was in a way farmed out to the governor, who was, in return for a fixed amount of money to be remitted annually to the king at Kabul,given a free hand in the internal administration of Kashmir, and permitted to collect the revenue by any means, fair or foul. It may safely be assumed that under such conditions the administrative machinery was maintained only in name.

Military Organisation

The military organisation in Kashmir during the medieval times did not appreciably differ in the first years of the Muslim rule from that in

the Hindu period. But with the emergence of several powerful nobles and adventurers on the scene, the set-up was considerably altered. For whereas previously the army was under the king or his commander-in-chief, it ceased to function as an independent unit with the ushering in of the Mughal rule in 1586, when Akbar seems to have disbanded the army of the Chaks recruited chiefly from the Khasas, Rajputs, Sayyids and other warlike tribes.

The army consisted of four categories — (1) the standing army, (2) provincial troops, (3) feudal levies, and (4) volunteers. The standing army comprised the cavalry, infantry, the elephant corps and artillery. The standing army was the main support of the king in peace or war. Recruited mainly from the martial tribes of Khasas, Rajputs, Magreys, Chaks, Rainas and others, the army was stationed in Srinagar,and kept ready to follow the Sultan to war. It consisted of foot and cavalry. The horsemen rode ponies bred chiefly on the mountain meadows of Kashmir. These were sure-footed and invaluable in the hilly regions where no wheeled traffic was possible. There were, however, only a few elephants in the army, which though not of great help in the campaigns in hills, were of immense value in battles fought in the plains of India.

The provincial troops stationed in towns and places of strategic importance were kept always ready to meet any invader. For instance, every pass leading to Kashmir had a number of forts to prevent the enemy from making a bid for the throne of Kashmir

The feudal levies, directly under the command of the powerful nobles, were always of doubtful loyalty to the king and so were the armies of the vassal hill chiefs. But in times of grave emergency against an invader, the king had the support of the volunteers who flocked to his banner and were ready to follow in battle in defence of the Kingdom.

The weapons carried by the armed forces consisted of a sword, bow and arrows, spear, battle-axe and mace. The soldiers wore coats of mail. The horses were caparisoned with steel. There is, however, some controversy regarding the use of gunpowder and cannon by the Kashmiri soldiers during and after the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin. Srivara refers to a weapon, made for the first time in Kashmir in the time of Zain-ul-abidin which "destroys forts, pierces the hearts of men,strikes horses with terror, throws balls of stone from a distance and remains unseen by the soldiers from encampments."[19] Zain-ul-abidin experimented with

19. Srivara,. p. 36.

new metals and their alloys until he found one which was new and hard. With this a cannon was cast and "at his command," says Srivara, "I composed a few lines in praise of the weapon." But because of the difficulty of manufacturing these weapons, their use seems to have been restricted. That is why in his detailed account of the civil war in Kashmir during the reigns of Sultan Muhammad Shah, the Chronicler does not mention the use of cannon or musket. It was only in the time of the later Shah Mir Sultans and Chaks that we come across a mention of muskets and gunpowder in use among the Kashmir army. "Yusuf Shah's army, which was organised to resist the Mughal invasion under Raja Bhagwan Das, is said to have had 7,000 musketeers, but the number appears to be highly exaggerated."[20]

From a closer study of the later *Rajatarangini* of Jonaraja and Srivara, we can have a fairly detailed picture of the mode of fighting during the Sultan period. It appears that the army was composed of five corps: centre, two wings, vanguard and rearguard. Elephants whose number was very limited came in front followed by the cavalry. The armed attack was led by the commander himself, his own pluck and dash going a long way in determining the outcome of the battle. Sometimes there were single combats as a result of a challenge from one side to another. The tempo of the battle rose with the beating of kettle-drums and conches. There does not appear any uniform having been worn by the troops, but each side in the combat had some distinguishing mark. There were banners carried by bearers shouting the battle cry. These banners were invariably of a blood-red colour. [21]

The Kashmiri army commanders took the fullest advantage of the natural defences of the kingdom, its mountains and narrow passes, forests and meadows. They were past masters in guerrilla warfare, and often beat back with heavy losses far stronger armies in numbers and equipment. Yaqub Shah Chak, for instance, dealt severe blows on the mighty Mughal army with only a handful of soldiers.

To make the defences of the kingdom foolproof, the Kashmiris built forts commanding the passes and garrisoned them with experienced and loyal troops. During the Hindu period the passes were controlled by a single officer called *Duarapati* or Lord of the Gate. But in the period of the Sultans, the *nayaks* were the guardians of the passes and functioned under the Sultan directly. The post of the *nayak* during the Sultanate was generally hereditary, Jagirs being given to them in return for their

20. Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans.* p. 212
21. Jonaraja, p. 75; Srivara, p. 207.

services. They not only controlled the defence of the passes, but acted as customs officials too. No traveller could come in or leave the Valley without a *rahdari* or permit from the Hakim. The safety of the Valley from foreign invasion thus depended upon the efficiency and loyalty of the *nayaks*. Whenever the defence of the passes was neglected or the *nayaks* turned traitors, the Valley was easily invaded.

The royal stable or the cavalry was the mainstay of the armed forces of the king. The Sultan entirely depended upon the loyalty of his cavalry and devoted most of his attention to its proper equipment and the strength of the ponies. Royal claimants to the throne always tried to seize the horses first. Thus we find that Haji Khan, in making his bid for the royal throne at his father's death, first seized the royal stable, which made his rival Adam Khan to despair of the success of an encounter with him and he fled to India. Similarly Ghazi Chak, in order to overthrow Daulat Chak, seized the royal horses.

The accounts pertaining to the armed forces — maintenance of registers of soldiers, disbursement of their salaries, and supply of equipment — was in the hands of an officer called the Mir Bakhshi. Under the Mughals he possessed considerable powers and influence, but he does not seem to have enjoyed the same position and prestige under the Sultans. The first mention of a *Mir Bakhshi* in the Chronicles is in the reign of Ali Shah.

From a study of the military exploits of the Sultans of Kashmir, it appears that the people of the land had long and glorious martial traditions. The soldiers of Kashmir were tough fighters both in the hills and the plains. It was in the reign of Sultan Shihab-ud-din that Kashmir brought under subjection large territories in the Punjab, Sind and north-western regions of India. Kandahar and Ghazni feared him.

Under Sultan Zain-ul-abidin the Kashmir army won further laurels. He is said to have had 100,000 infantry and 30,000 horse. He was a skilful commander and his army officers had deep faith in his knowledge of military science and love for his charming personality. He extended his sway over the Punjab from Peshawar to Sirhind. He sent his forces to the aid of Jasrat Khokar who thus conquered the rest of the Punjab easily. In the east Zain-ul-abidin attacked and subjugated the kingdom of Tibet.

During the reigns of the later Sultans the military strength of the kingdom was frittered away in internecine warfare with the result that most of the territories tributary to Kashmir threw off their allegiance to it. In fact some warlike hill tribes like those of the Poonch and Rajauri

areas and of the Jhelum valley, taking advantage of the fratricidal wars in the Valley, launched marauding attacks on its opulent inhabitants and carried away precious loot. The fighting skill and courage of Kashmiri soldiers were amply demonstrated in 1532 AD when they forced Mirza Haider Dughlat's Central Asian soldiers numbering more than 5,000 to lay down arms and quit the land by the way they had come. Later in the battle against the Mughal forces of Babar, Humayun and of Akbar, Kashmiri soldiers gave a good account of themselves.

No wonder Akbar and his successors adopted a policy of systematic suppression of the martial spirit of the Kashmiris. To overawe the people Akbar built the fort round Hari Parbat. "Means were at the same time adopted," says Lieutenant Newall,[22] "of rendering the native Kashmirians less warlike and of breaking their old independent spirit.....Nawab Itqad Khan, who bacame the Mughal governor in 1622 AD was cruel and commenced a systematic destruction of the Chaks, whom he hunted down and put to death. Bands of this fierce tribe still infested the surrounding hills, especially the range of the north of Kashmir, from which strongholds they issued on their predatory excursions. This had the effect of almost exterminating that ill-fated tribe, the descendants of which, at the present day, are the professional horse-keepers of the Valley, and in their character, still, in some degree, display remnants of that ancient independent spirit, which led to their destruction."

After the disbandment of the Kashmirian army, the Mughals posted in the Valley troops from their grand army. But when it was found that all opposition to the imperial government had been crushed, they withdrew a part of their forces and a local militia of 92,400 infantry and 4,892 cavalry were entrusted with the defence of the frontiers on the east and north of the Valley.

By the time the Afghans established their rule in Kashmir, the martial spirit of the people of the Valley had nearly been crushed. But even then they gave a good account of their past traditions and fought Ishk Aqasi's forces till the last. More than 20,000 Afghan soldiers were permanently posted in Kashmir[23] to hold the people in awe and when their spirit was completely broken, Azad Khan could with ease hold the Valley with no more than "three thousand horse and foot, chiefly Afghan."[24]

22 *J.A.S.B., No. 5.* 1854, p. 433.
23. Hugel, *Travels.* p. 123
24. Forster, *Journey,* pp. 32-33.

The martial traditions of the Kashmiris were, however, revived under the Afghan governor Atta Muhammad Khan, when he declared his independence and raised his banner of revolt against the authority of Kabul. He recruited a large army of Kashmiri soldiers to fight the Afghan army which was sent to reduce him. But before the tyrannised Kashmiri could find his feet again, he came under the rule of a new master — the Sikhs.

Public Finances

The financial resources of medieval Kashmir were not different from those of the earlier Hindu period. The main source of income was the demand on agricultural produce. The methods of assessment were sharing, appraisement or measurement. The general rate of State demand varied during the rule of the Sultans, but assumed uniformity under the Mughals. The Afghans, however, do not seem to have followed any regular pattern of revenue assessment, the exactions from the cultivator varying with the amount the revenue farmer had to pay to the king.

Shah Mir, the first Sultan, on his accession to the throne, fixed the revenue demand at one-sixth of the produce of land,[25] probably the low rate being fixed partly to win the goodwill of the people and partly to rehabilitate the shattered economy of the kingdom. His successors, however, increased the demand to one-third of the produce from land. But in the event of a flood or failure of crops, the State demand was either reduced considerably or remitted altogether. Thus in a famine during Zain-ul-abidin's reign, the demand was reduced to one-fourth, and in some places like Zainagir to one-seventh.[26]

Mirza Haider Dughlat in his *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* gives an idea of the revenue assessment system. The land was divided into four kinds: (*i*) *Abi* — cultivated by irrigation, (*ii*) land not needing irrigation but depending on rainfall, (*iii*) orchards, and (*iv*) meadows. Assessment on the first category was heavier than on other types. But lands which depended on rainfall for irrigation were taxed lightly. Land on which fruit was cultivated was exempted from taxation under the Sultans. The Chaks, however, imposed a tax on orchards, but it was abolished by Yusuf Shah. The meadow lands meant for grazing purposes were not taxed at all, since no crops were grown on these.

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25. Jonaraja Munich MS., F. 53b.
26. Srivara., p. 156.

The system of collection of revenue by the Sultans was identical to that prevailing under the Hindu rulers. Each village was assessed at so many *Kharwars* of rice, and the grain could not be removed from the threshing floor by the cultivator till he paid the share of the State. The State's share was removed to the city and sold to the citizens at fixed prices. This naturally resulted in keeping the prices steady, and prevented the anti-social elements from cornering the grain in times of scarcity.

Before Kashmir came under the sway of the Mughals, the Sultans and the Chaks had fixed two more duties on the people, namely, *baj* and *tamga*. The former was loosely known for any toll or tax. The latter was (a) a demand in excess of the land revenue, or (b) in land tolls.[27] Akbar exempted the people from these two duties. There were only *Sair-i-Jihat* cesses.[28] In the time of Aurangzeb *Jazya* or poll-tax was levied on the Hindus.

The immemorial tradition in Kashmir considered the whole of the land as the property of the ruler. Of some portion of the *Khalsah*[29] land the sovereigns divested themselves by grants in Jagirs for various periods. Though before the country came under the suzerainty of the Mughals, "one-third had been for a long time past the nominal share of the state, yet more than two shares were actually taken."[30] Akbar fixed the share of the State at one-half. The system of revenue collection was by appraisement and division of crops, assessment for crops paying special rates not being the custom of the country.

The settlement of land and the assessment of revenue was undertaken immediately after Akbar's conquest of the Valley. Qazi Ali's assessment which was resented by the people, was arrived at by striking an average of the prices current over several years past. The *Kharwar* in kind was thus ascertained to be equal to 29 *dams*. Of the assessed revenue 901,663 *Kharwars* which in terms of money came to 12,022,183 *dams*, were to be paid in cash and the rest in kind. Todar Mal, however, fixed the revenue at 3,079,543 *Kharwars*, out of which 1,015,330 *Kharwars* were to be paid in cash.

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27. Jadunath Sarkar, *India of Aurangzeb*.
28. In its original purport, the word signifies moving, walking or the remainder: From the latter it came to denote the remaining or all other sources of revenue in addition to the land tax from a variety of imposts, as, customs, travellers' dues, house-fees, market-tax, etc. -Wilson's *Glossary*.
29. Lands of which the revenue was the property of the government. -Wilson's *Glossary*.
30. *Ain-i-Akbari*.

Table 1 shows the amount of land revenue (in Akbar-shahi rupees) derived from Kashmir in different years:

TABLE 1

Year	Revenue (Rs.)	Sarkars	Mahals
1594 AD (*Ain*)	1,552,826	1	38
1648 AD	3,750,000	...	...
1654 AD	2,859,750	...	...
1666 AD (Bernier)	3,500,000	...	...
1695 AD *Dastur-ul-Amal*	3,157,125	1	46
1697 AD	3,505,000	...	...
1700 AD	6,947,125	...	...
1720 AD	5,320,502	2	75

During the Afghan rule, the system of revenue collection differed essentially in one respect. Generally the revenue was farmed out with, of course, clear instructions from the governor that the State's share of land revenue was to be collected according to the assessment as prevailing during the Mughal days. But it was rarely that these instructions were followed in actual practice. The revenue farmer when pressed to make heavier payment resorted to unjust and cruel exactions from the cultivators. According to George Forster[31] who visited Kashmir in 1783 AD, a revenue of between 20 to 30 lakhs of rupees was collected from Kashmir, of which a tribute of seven lakhs was remitted to the treasury. A portion of this tribute was transmitted to the Afghan capital at Kabul in shawl goods.[32] The revenue return of Kashmir under Zaman Shah[33] was:

The Treasury		... Rs 2,250,000
Taluqdars		... Rs 628,000
Establishment		... Rs 1,140,000
	Total	... Rs 4,018,000

Taxes Other Than Land Revenue

Besides the land revenue there were several other taxes and

31. Journey., p. 32.
32. Ibid., p. 21.
33. Information based on Ghulam Sarwar's papers preserved in National Archives, New Delhi. Ghulam Sarwar was deputed by the British Government to Afghanistan during 1793-95 AD. when Lord Cornwallis was Governor-General of India.

cesses levied on the people. A notable tax under the Muslim kings was *Zakat* (poor Tax) which was realised from the Muslims according to the value of their movable and immovable property. The revenue from this tax was considerable, there being a religious injunction for the payment of *Zakat*. The customs duty levied on goods imported into the kingdom was also an important source of revenue.

The *Jazya* on non-Muslim subjects was first levied in the reign of Sultan Sikandar. The revenue derived from this tax was not much, but it was vexatious and iniquitous. Zain-ul-abidin did away with it, and cancelled other discriminatory taxes on the Hindus as for example, the tax on the cremation of the dead.[34] Yusuf Shah is said to have abolished the taxes on artisans, cows and gardens and the *Zakat* on boatmen. This proves their existence during the reigns of earlier Sultans.

When the Mughals conquered Kashmir, they claimed to have abolished many of the vexatious taxes like *baj* and *tamga*, the levy of two *dams* on fuel, poll-tax on the boatmen, and demands of sheep from the villagers.[35]

The Afghans levied a number of taxes both on Muslims and non-Muslims. The first governor Ishk Aqasi realised more than rupees two crores from the unfortunate people, and during Haji Karimdad Khan and Azad Khan's regime heavy taxes like *Zar-i-Ashkhas, Zar-i-Dood*, etc, were realised from the rich and the poor. The main object of the Afghan governor was to extort as heavy a tribute from the people of possible. Azim Khan, one of the last governors, carried away more than a crore of rupees in cash and jewellery to his home in Afghanistan. Here we may mention that during the time of the early Sultans another important source of revenue was the tribute and *nazrana* from jagirdars and feudatory princelings. A considerable amount was also realised in war indemnity and tribute following military expeditions to the Punjab and north-western provinces of India.

The main items of expenditure were the army and the civil service particularly during the time of the Sultans. The Mughal army and the civilian staff stationed in the province were also paid from the local treasury. A change in the mode of payment to the soldiers by Qazi Ali resulted in a rebellion. The Afghan governors also paid their soldiers stationed in Kashmir from the revenue of the province.

Expenses on the household of the Sultan, or of the governor, his

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34. Srivara. p,143.
35. *Ain-i-Akbari*, ii, 367.

court and a large retinue also seem to have been considerable. We can gauge their extent from the fact that one-third of the total revenues was allotted to some of the weak Sultans by their Wazirs to run their household and maintain a pompous court.

Expenditure on public utility and social services like education, hospitals and free kitchens, was also quite heavy. The Sultans maintained schools and colleges, charitable dispensaries and in times of scarcity gave free food to the famished people.

Road building and other public works were also important items of State expenditure. We learn of poplar avenues and gardens laid out by the Mughal and Afghan governors. They also built bridges and travellers' rest houses. Zain-ul-abidin and some Mughal governors built irrigation canals. Religious endowments like *Khanqahs,* mosques and poor houses also claimed a share of the State revenue.

Most of the Sultans and Mughal governors were patrons of art and literature and we learn of several poets and literateures receiving pensions and stipends from the rulers.

Agricultural Production

The condition of agriculture and of the peasant was deplorable during the time of the later Hindu kings when there was anarchy and instability in the land due to internecine wars and foreign invasions. It was only during the short rule of Shah Mir that a semblance of orderly government was restored and attention paid to the cultivation of rice and other crops.

Rice, the staple food of the people of the Valley, was extensively cultivated as before. It continued to be the chief crop grown during both the Mughal and Afghan rule. "Though *shali* (rice) is plentiful," remarks Abul Fazal, "the finest quality is not available." Wheat and *mung* were also cultivated, but gram and barley were not. Some portions of land were artificially irrigated. The numerous rivulets and springs supplied water to the rest of the fields. The Valley did not wholly depend upon rains for irrigation. Canals constructed by Zain-ul-abidin at Zukru and Mattan were fed from perennial rivers, the Sindh and the Lidder. "From the sides of these mountains gush forth innumerable springs and streams of water which are conducted by means of embanked earthen channels even to the top of the numerous hillocks, " writes Bernier.

Again, "the numberless streams which issue from the mountains

maintain the Valley and the hillocks (*Karewas*) in the most delightful verdure. The whole kingdom wears the appearance of a fertile and highly cultivated garden."

Saffron was cultivated chiefly at Pampore where from 10,000, to 12,000 *bighas* of land were under cultivation during Akbar's time. There were some saffron fields at Paraspur as well. The method of cultivation is given very graphically by Jehangir in his Memoirs. There was a curious superstition then in existence. When the cultivation began, the farmers worshipped at the Zewan spring (near Pampore) and afterwards poured cow's milk into it. if as it fell, it sank into water, it was considered a good omen and a plentiful crop was expected; but if unfortunately it only floated, the peasants considered it an indication of bad luck.

In the *Waqyat-Jehangiri,* it is asserted that in an ordinary year 400 maunds of saffron were produced. Half belonged to the State and half to the cultivators.

During the time of Akbar the price of Kashmir saffron was from Rs 8 to Rs 10 per *Seer* (2 lbs.) and in Jehangir's time also about the same.

Watermelons and vegetables were cultivated on the floating gardens of the Dal. Watermelons of Kashmir were so famous for their juice and taste that the Mughal emperors had them taken to Agra for their table.

Kashmir produced a great variety of fruit in abundance. They were much better than the tropical fruits of the plains of India. Besides plum and mulberries there were "melons, apples, peaches and apricots which are excellent", remarks Abul Fazal. Though grapes were in plenty, finer qualities were rare. Bernier is all praise for the fruits of Kashmir. "The whole ground is enamelled with our European flowers and plants and covered with our apple, plum, apricot and walnut trees all bearing fruits in great abundance. The private gardens are full of melons, radishes, most of our pot herbs and others with which we are unacquainted." But as compared to the French varieties they were rather inferior. "The fruit is certainly inferior to our own," continues Bernier, "nor is it in such variety; but this, I am satisfied, is not attributable to the soil, but merely to the comparative ignorance of the gardeners, for they do not understand the culture and grafting of trees as we do in France."[36] He was, however, certain that with the introduction of better grafts from foreign countries and by paying more attention to planting and soil, the Kashmir fruit would attain the same degree of perfection as the French.

36. *Travels,* Trans. by Constable and Smith, p. 397.

However, in 1590 AD Muhammad Quli Ifshar, the *Daroga* of the gardens, first of all grafted Kashmir fruit trees with peaches brought from Kabul. The experiment succeeded and grafting has since then been widely practised. Zaffar Khan Ahsan the governor under Shah Jehan also improved the quality and taste of the cherry, plum, peach, and grapes by using better grafts and planting imported saplings from Persia and Kabul.

The villagers kept beehives. The honey was exported to the rest of India. Milk and butter were in abundance and though Kashmir cows were smaller in size than the cows in India, they yielded a larger quantity of milk.

The importance of irrigation from a revenue point of view must have always been recognised by the rulers of the country. We have already noted the important irrigation projects completed during Lalitaditya and Avantivarman's reign. In the medieval times too we find every respite from internal troubles marked by repairs to ancient canals or the construction of new ones. The long and peaceful reign of Zain-ul-abidin seems in particular to have been productive of important irrigation works. Jonaraja's and Srivara's Chronicles give a considerable list of canals constructed under this king.[37] Among these the canal which distributed the water of the Pohar river over the Zainagir Pargana and the one by which the water of the Lidder was conducted to the arid plateau of Martand, deserve special mention. Of the smaller canals built to serve mainly as communication channels, the Lachhamkul and Mar are worth notice. The former carried water for drinking and other purposes to Zain-ul-abidin's new town of Naushahr from the Sindh and was extended to the Jama Masjid and then emptied itself into the Mar canal. The latter was dug through the old city of Srinagar and carried a portion of the surplus waters of the Dal lake to as far as Shadipur at the confluence of the Jhelum and Sindh rivers.

We have no record of any new canals having been built by the Mughals, but they seem to have repaired the older ones. Their love for gardens and springs resulted in building of tanks round the springs and of water channels to feed the fountains and cascades, which resulted incidently in increasing the irrigation facilities for the cultivators.

The Afghan rulers were not very much interested in works of public utility, but we have mention of a canal being built by Amir Khan Jawansher to link the Dal and Anchar lakes. The canal still bears his name.

37. *See*, Jonaraja, 1141-55, 1257 Sqq; Srivara., 1-414 sq.

Non-Agricultural Production

Kashmir has large tracts of forest-land from time immemorial and it is chiefly on account of this that wood has been so cheap there. No consideration, however, seems to have been given to the conservation and proper use of forests. They were considered the property of everyone and were freely exploited. Had it not been for the extensive tracts of forest, Kashmir would have by the end of the medieval period become devoid of this natural gift. Travellers to Kashmir were struck by the vast quantity of timber used for building and other purposes. Mirza Haider Dughlat remarks that the houses were all made of timber. "The houses are all of wood," wrote Abul Fazal. Similar remarks have been made by Bernier.

Geologists have asserted that Kashmir is rich in mineral wealth. During the medieval times we have mention of a copper mine being exploited by Zain-ul-abidin. Under the Mughals the iron mines of Shari and Anantang yielded metal enough for the manufacture of agricultural implements. There was a quarry of agate and onyx near the village of Khonamuh which supplied stones for the artistic manufacture of jewellery, stoneware, etc, for which Kashmir was famous.

Handicrafts Manufacture

From ancient times Kashmiris are celebrated for their artistic manufactures. Woodwork, metalwork and papier mache received an impetus under the benevolent rule of Zain-ul-abidin. This is attested to by Mirza Haider Dughlat who in his *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* affirms:

> "In Kashmir one meets with all those arts and crafts which are in most cities uncommon, such as stone-polishing, stone-cutting, bottle-making, window cutting, gold-beating, etc. In the whole of Maver-ul-Nahr (the country beyond the river Oxus, i.e. Khorasan) except in Samarqand and Bukhara, these are nowhere to be met with, while in Kashmir they are even abundant. This is all due to Sultan Zain-ul-abidin."

But Kashmir's main industry, the shawl manufacture, dates its revival to an earlier time. It is said that Mir Sayyid Ali of Hamadan, known as Shah Hamadan, who visited Kashmir for the second time in 1378 AD and stayed on for over two years, encouraged some shawl weavers to produce this fine textile. Sultan Qutb-ud-din who was then the ruler of Kashmir patronised, nourished and stimulated the industry.

More than one and a half century later, a resident of Khokand in Central Asia, named Nagz Beg came to Kashmir with his master Mirza Haider Dughlat, and got prepared a piece of *pushmina,* $1\frac{1}{2}$ yards wide and presented it to the Mirza. "What is this?" asked his master. "A shawl,"was the reply. He called it by this name because the people of Khokand call a blanket a shawl in their language. It is said that since that time it came to be known as shawl. Nagz Beg later got more shawls woven with different patterns in red and green.

The *Amlikar* or embroidered shawl also owes its origin to the fertile imagination of a Kashmiri artisan named Ala Baba who lived in the time of Afghan ruler Azad Khan. It is said that Ala Baba was led to this pattern of shawl manufacture by a fowl walking on a white sheet of cloth which left the imprints of its dirty feet on it. He embroidered the spots with coloured thread and the cloth looking prettier with this design, came to be manufactured in large quantities.

During the Mughal period shawl industry received a great stimulus. Akbar was very fond of shawls, and took pains to improving this industry.

"Formerly shawls were but rarely brought from Kashmir and those who had them used to wear them over their shoulders in four folds, so that they lasted for a long time. Now they are worn single by people of all degrees. His Majesty has introduced the custom of wearing two shawls, one under the other, which is considerable addition to their beauty. By the attention of His Majesty, the manufacture of shawls in Kashmir is in a very flourishing state."[38]

During Akbar's time, shawls became very popular and were manufactured in numerous ranges of price to suit the purses of both the middle and upper classes. The price of an ordinary piece of shawl $1\frac{1}{2}$ yards long was from two rupees to eight *mohurs.* Shawl Cheerah was from two rupees to twenty-five *mohurs,* shawl Foteh from a half to three *mohurs,* and shawl Jamah from a half to four *mohurs.*

In the time of Aurangzeb also shawls were the fashion of the day. The Mughals and Indians, both men and women, wore them in winter round their heads, passing them over the left shoulder as a mantle. The price of the best kind of shawl-piece about three yards in length and two in breadth, with ornamental embroidery about a foot in length at both ends, was from fifty to one hundred and fifty rupees of those times. "The fur of the beaver," wrote Bernier, "is not so soft and fine as these shawls."

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38. *Ain-i-Akbari.* translated by Gladwin, p. 79.

The Afghans too showed much liking for shawls. Shawls had by then captured the imagination of the fashionable world and were in great demand in Iran, Turkistan and Europe. "In Kashmir are seen," wrote George Forster in 1783, "merchants and commercial agents of most of the principal cities of Northern India, also of Tartary, Persia and Turkey who, at the same time, advance their fortunes and enjoy the pleasure of a fine climate and country over which are profusely spread the various beauties of nature." He puts the number of shawl looms at 16,000, though he says that under the Mughals it was 40,000.[39]

This decline in the number of shawl looms may be ascribed to the cruel taxation policy of the Afghan rulers, who tried to suck the very lifeblood of both the weaver and the trader through the institution of Dag Shawl. In the time of Atta Muhammad Khan, shawl had become fashionable in Europe where it was carried by Napoleon who received it as a gift from the Khedive. Consequently there was a great demand for the shawl and an increase in the number of looms which rose to 24,000 in 1813 when Azim Khan was the Afghan governor of Kashmir. Finding it a profitable source of income, he reintroduced the system of forcible sale of grain at enhanced prices to shawl weavers in addition to the payment of excise duty. The shawl produced on the loom was taken by the State and the price of grain together with the amount of duty leviable on it, was recovered from its sale proceeds. Nobody could sell a piece which did not bear the stamp of Dag Shawl in token of payment of duty thereon. The evasion of payment made one liable to condign punishment.

The other woollen manufactures were *pattu* and *dirma*. Kashmiris made their dress out of these. *Pattu* and *dirma* were also exported, but not in such quantities as shawls. Woollen cloth coming from Tibet was much better than these and was, therefore, preferred in India. During the Mughal days a *than* (10 yards) of *pattu* could be had for one or two rupees of the then currency and a *than* of *dirma* for two to four.

A good quantity of silk was produced in Kashmir during the medieval period. Zain-ul-abidin improved the industry considerably. "Among the wonders of Kashmir", writes Mirza Haider Dughlat, "are the numbers of mulberry trees cultivated for their leaves for the production of silk."[40] The industry seems to have continued to flourish under the Mughals too. "The mulberry is little eaten". Abul Fazal writes, "its leaves being reserved for the silk-worm."[41] The eggs were brought from Gilgit

39. *Travels*, p.22.
40. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, 16 b.
41. Jarret's trans, of *Ain-i-Akbari*, p.349.

and Ladakh and were reared in the Valley. But "the production of silk in Kashmir was worked up locally and does not appear to have been extensive."[42] However, the small quantity of fibre that was produced was sold in cities in the rest of India, no silk-weaving industry being present in the Valley.

The carpet weaving industry owes its origin to Zain-ul-abidin who brought carpet-weavers from Samarqand. The industry flourished for a long time after his reign, but in course of time it decayed and died.

It was, however, in the time of Ahmad Beg Khan, one of emperor Jehangir's governors of Kashmir that a Kashmiri Muslim, named Akhund Rahnuma went to perform the Hadj pilgrimage via Central Asia. On his way back he visited Andijan in Persia where carpets were manufactured. There he picked up the art and restarted the industry in Kashmir. The pile carpets made in Kashmir attained great perfection and were of floral design with mosques, gardens, wild animals, gliding fish, etc.[43]

During the period of the Sultans and the Mughals, Kashmir arts and crafts had reached a high level of workmanship. The Mughals, be it said to their credit, took a keen interest in Kashmir products and encouraged industries in every possible way. "The workmanship and beauty", observes Bernier, "of their *palkeys,* bedsteads, trunks, inkstands, boxes, spoons, and various other things are quite remarkable. They perfectly understand the art of varnishing and are eminently skilful in closely imitating the beautiful veins of a certain wood, by inlaying with gold thread, so delicately wrought that I never saw anything more elegant or perfect."

An industry for which Kashmir became famous all over India was paper-making. Prior to the introduction of this industry by Zain-ul-abidin in the 12th century AD, birch-bark was used for writing purposes in Kashmir. Numerous birch-bark manuscripts are still extant.

Zain-ul-abidin imported paper-makers from Samarqand. A factory was established at Naushahar, the new city of the Sultan. The pulp was made from rags at Ganderbal, nine miles from Srinagar on the Leh road and this pulp was turned into paper in vats at Naushahar.

The Kashmir paper was of silky texture and glossy appearance and was in great demand in India for writing purposes. George Forster writing in 1783, says: "the Kashmirians fabricated the best writing paper of the

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42. Moreland, *India at the death of Akbar.*
43. Pandit Anand Koul, *Kashmir,* pp. 40-41.

East," and that it was formerly "an article of extensive traffic."[44] The Kashmir paper possessed the quality that once the ink had been washed off, it could again be used for writing.[45]

The manufacture of paper reminds us of another industry which may rightly be said to be peculiar to Kashmir, namely, papier mache. This was also introduced into the Valley by Sultan Zain-ul-abidin who imported artists from Samarqand.[46] Actually the industry has derived its name from `mashed paper', the process involving the pasting on sheets of paper to moulds of the article to be produced. It is then painted and varnished and beautiful floral and other designs drawn with a fine painting brush. "The skill shown by the *naqash* (designer)", says Lawrence, "in sketching and designing is remarkable." The industry reached its apogee during the Mughal rule when the products of the papier mache art like a pen-cases, jewellery-boxes, book-ends, etc, were in great demand in Delhi and other provincial capitals.

The wood carving industry, as noted by Bernier, was also in a flourishing state during the Mughal period and earlier. Specimens of the ancient carpenter's art are still extant in the *Khatamband* ceilings, *pinjra* or lattice-work, and carving in the mosques of Shah Hamadan and Naqashband Sahib in Srinagar. Since building industry during the medieval times changed over from stone to timber, the carpenter was in great demand and seems to have commanded a market in the bordering hill states as well.

Industrial Organisation

Very scanty information is available on the industrial organisation in medieval Kashmir. We only know about the shawl manufacture that it was at first in the form of a cottage industry, the shawl-weaver working on his loom in the house,his wife and children occasionally helping him in making the warp and woof, etc. Subsequently during the Mughal and Afghan period when the demand from the Mughal court, Persia and Europe increased, the industry developed under private entrepreneurs, called *karkhandars,* who set up looms and employed weavers. In the time of Akbar there were 2,000 looms for making shawls.[47] When, however, the department of Dag Shawl came into existence under Haji

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44. *Journey,* ii, p. 19.
45. *Muntakhabu-u-Twarkh,* iii, 202.
46. Pandit Anand Koul, *Op, Cit.,* p. 45
47. Razi. *Haft Iqlim,* f. 1569.

Karim Dad Khan, the products of the loom were taken by the State which after deducting the duty and other charges sold them to merchants engaged in this trade.

Regarding other industries it is highly probable that since Kashmiris dislike change, the present system of cottage manufacture must have been in existence then as well.

Peasant and Labourer

The lot of the peasant in the Valley during the medieval period was pitiable. The civil wars and disturbances continued, particularly during the reigns of the later Sultans but the people had also by then acquired political consciousness to some extent and resisted the imposition of *begar*. The mere fact that Zain-ul-abidin undertook extensive irrigation projects is clear proof of the improved condition of the peasantry who, it appears, were in search of more land to work on. But the most encouraging factor was the settlement of land revenue and fixation of rent.

The hated system of *begar* or forced labour, however, was not altogether abolished by the Sultans. "In fact from the time of Shihab-ud-din, it was exacted even from the hanjis who were required to serve the king for seven days in every month."[48] Besides transport, compulsory labour was taken for collecting saffron which was a State monopoly. A certain quantity of salt was, however, paid in wages to these labourers. It was in the time of Ghazi Shah Chak that the peasant was given 11 *traks* of saffron flower, from which he had to give back $\frac{1}{4}$ *trak* of pure saffron to the government. This was so devised as to leave him hardly any remuneration for his work. It was Akbar who on his third visit to Kashmir abolished this custom to the great relief of the peasants.[49] Itqad Khan, the last governor of Kashmir under Jehangir, revived this iniquitous *corvee*, but when Shah Jehan who succeeded him came to know of it, he forthwith ended it, and dismissed Itqad.

Under the Mughals the condition of the peasants and labourers seems to have improved further. The large amount of land revenue realised from each Pargana must alone convince us that the peasant worked hard and got fair return for his labour. Of course *begar* was not uncommon even at that time, but the parctice did not reach the same alarming proportions as during the rule of the Afghans. As Lawrence puts it, "the very durability of some of the buildings of the Mughals,

48. Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, p. 251.
49 *Ain-i-Akbari* (Blochmann), p. 90.

suggested that the work was paid for; buildings constructed by forced and unpaid labour do not last long." We have the authority of the inscription on the Kathi Darwaza of Akbar's fort round Hari Parbat to prove that labour employed in constructing it was paid for. When Aurangzeb visited Kashmir in 1665, all the luggage of the royal camp was carried from Bhimber to Srinagar by Kashmiri porters. Some of them were sent by the governor of Kashmir, and some had come voluntarily in the expectation of earning a little money.

The wages fixed by the emperor were ten crowns (French) for every 100 lbs. weight.[50] Considering the mountainous paths and the passes that had to be traversed, a porter could not carry more than 50 lbs. The daily wages, assuming the journey to have been completed in ten days, would come to half a crown a day. The purchasing power of money being quite high and this being the wage paid by the government which must have been lower than the prevailing rate, it can safely be deduced that unskilled labour was fairly paid for.

Trade and Commerce

Although separated from the rest of India by high mountains, Kashmir had yet close trade relations with commercial centres in India as far away as Bengal and Coromandal coast. There was also a brisk import and export trade with Tibet, Central Asia, China and Persia.

Kashmir was accessible by 26 different routes, the most important of which have already been described in detail. During the Mughal period, the t o main routes leading to western Punjab and the plains of India passed through Bhimber and Pakhli.

Tieffenthaler speaks of the following route as generally followed by merchants. This was in use particularly during the Afghan rule, when due to disturbed conditions in the Punjab, the other routes had become unsafe. From Najibgarh, Alamnagar: Dharampur: Sharanpur: Tajpur: Guler: Nanh (at this place the road enters the mountains): Bilaspur, Jala: Zoali: Haripur: Manota: Basohli: Bhadrawah: Kishtwar: Srinagar.[51]

There were two trade routes to Central Asia. The first passed through Gilgit and Kashgar and the other was from Skardu to Yarkand, which passed the Baltero glacier and which, owing to change in the ice, is now no longer passable. These two routes also led to China, with which

50. Bernier, *Travels*, Edited by Constable and Smith.
51. Jadunath Sarkar, *India of Aurangzeb*.

country an appreciable quantity of trade was in existence then.

"But since the irruption of Shah Jehan into Little Tibet, the king of the latter place, not only interdicted the passage of the caravans, but forbade any person from Kashmir to enter his dominions." Trade connections between Kashmir and Central Asia and Tibet were so intimate that they could not be cut off altogether. The merchants, instead, took a longer and circuitous route. From Kashmir they went to Patna in Bihar, thence to Nepal, via Kuti (Nilam) Pass to Shigatze, and thence to Lhasa. From Lhasa there was a trade-route to Sinning Fu on the Chinese frontier, north-east of Khosai and the Charing Nor.

Imports and Exports

The main commodities imported in bulk were salt and shawl wool. Most of the salt came from the Punjab over the Pir Panjal route, but some also came from the salt lakes in Ladakh and from Chang Thong. Import of salt became difficult during the times of civil war or foreign invasion and we have several passages in the Chronicles describing the hardships that the people had to undergo due to shortage of this essential commodity.[52]

It was the raw material for their main industry, the shawl manufacture, that lured the Kashmiri traders to the inhospitable regions of Tibet. The shawl industry which saw its hey day during the Mughal and Afghan rule, requires the warm, soft and flossy underwool called *keli phumb* or *pushm* of *kel* or shawl-goat inhabiting the elevated regions of Tibet. "The caravans from Tibet further loaded themselves with the produce of the country, such as musk, crystal, jade and especially with a quantity of very fine wool of two kinds, the first from the sheep of that country, and the latter which is known by the name of *touz* and resembles as already observed, the beaver, and should rather be called hair than wool" .[53]

In addition to shawl-wool, Tibet exported to Kashmir gold and musk, while woollen cloth was brought from Ladakh by Ladakhi traders.[54] From Khotan came its famous jade and also silks, carpets, pottery, brass, and copper vessels.[55] Agate, opal, turquoise and other kinds of precious stones were imported from Badakshan, Bukhara and Yarkand.[56]

52. Sriv., p. 327.
53. Bernier, *Letters*, p. 426.
54. Jonaraja, p. 18.
55. Stein *Khotan.i*, pp. 132-33.
56. Lawrence, *Valley*, p. 65.

But it was mainly from Indian markets that Kashmir imported most of its cotton piece-goods, sugar, spices, gold, silver and copper.

The most important article of export was Kashmir's shawl, which found a ready market in India, but which according to Abul Fazal was sent "to every clime."[57] Other commodities which were exported in rather limited quantities were woollen piece-goods and blankets, fresh and dried fruits, saffron, timber and horses. Besides, Kashmir and Ladakh served as entrepots, most of the overland trade between India and Central Asia and Tibet passing through the kingdom. In the bazaars of Srinagar and Leh met Turkish, Tibetan, Indian and Nepalese traders who had built their rest-houses and godowns there. Table 2 gives an idea of the principal commodities imported into and exported from Kashmir during the Muslim rule.

TABLE 2

Place	*Exports*	*Imports*
Rest of India	Fruits : fresh and dried saffron, shawls and woollen stuff, silk-fibre, horses woodwork, metalwork and stonework.	Precious metals for coinage and ornaments, salt, cotton piece-goods, spices.
Central Asia and Tibet	Saffron, woodwork, metal Work	Shawl wool, woollen cloth, musk, crystal, jade, salt, tea, kahruba and Mumirani-Chini.

Commercial Organisation

Kashmir traders seem to have been very enterprising during the medieval times. Most of the import and export trade of not only Kashmir but of Tibet as well was in their hands. There were also Hindustani businessmen who had established their branches and agencies in the Valley. At the conquest of Kashmir by the Afghans, nearly 80 such firms closed their business due to insecurity of life and property.[58] In so far as the trade with Central Asia and Tibet was concerned, Kashmiri traders established their business houses in Yarkand, Kashgar and Tibet. Mr Bogle who was sent to Tibet on a political mission by Warren Hastings in 1774 was told by the Teshu Lama:

57. *Ain-i-Akbari*, ii, p. 358.
58. *Tarikh-i-Hassan*, MSS.

"Muhammadan conquests in Hindustan tended to check the formerly unfettered intercourse between Tibet and the valley of the Ganges through the passes of the Southern Himalaya: but that this obstacle was by no means permanent and the commercial enterprise of the Newars and the Kashmiris brought the land of peace-loving Lamas into friendly intercourse with peoples whose countries extended from the frontiers of Siberia to the Shores of the Bay of Bengal."[59]

Mr Bogle found in Tibet that the natives of Kashmir like the Jews in Europe or the Armenians in Turkish Empire, "scattered themselves over the eastern kingdom of Asia and carried on an extensive traffic between the distant parts of it and had formed establishments in Lhasa and all the principal towns in the country."

A part of the shawl trade with India during the Mughal and Afghan times was carried on through the agency of the government. Most of the shawls, for instance, were taken by officials of the government and sent to Delhi and Agra where some of them used to be presented to the emperor and the rest sold to courtiers and the nobility. The Mughal emperors, during their many visits were followed by a horde of traders from Hindustan who purchased shawls and other artistic ware and sold them at profit in the chief cities of India.

Internal Trade

This trade comprised imported commodities and goods produced in Kashmir. According to Mirza Haider Dughlat, the markets and streets of Srinagar were all paved with hewn stones. In the markets only drapers and retail dealers were to be found. But other tradesmen like the grocers, druggists, beer-sellers and bakers did business in their own homes. So was the case with shawl and silk merchants.[60] During the Mughal period, however, this custom seems to have died out, and we learn from Bernier that trade in Srinagar was very brisk and the streets were lined with long rows of shops offering various commodities for sale.

Trade in grains was, however, controlled from the custom of realising land revenue in grain rather than in cash. The State's share of the grain was stored in granaries and was sold to the people at controlled rates. This naturally had a stabilising effect on prices in times of scarcity when the government would come out with its surplus grain for sale.

59. Markham, *Mission of Bogle to Tibet*, p. iv.
60. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, p. 425.

However, it appears that these controls did not materially hinder the growth of trade, for, the Kashmir merchants in medieval times were quite prosperous.[61]

Other towns which were centres of trade in the Valley were Anantnag, Sopore, Shopyan, Avantipura and Baramula.

The chief means of transport in the Valley was the river. Porters also carried heavy loads over difficult country. Pack-ponies were used for carrying paddy and other foodgrains from distant villages to the town market. Hand and bullock carts and other wheeled carriages were unknown, Roads were narrow and two ponies could at best go abreast. The rivers were spanned by bridges constructed of stone and timber, or by rope bridges formed of three cords made of twisted twigs. These rope bridges were naturally used for foot traffic only. The permanent bridges were a feature introduced under the rule of the Sultans. Previously there existed only boat bridges under the rule of the Hindu kings. Sharaf-ud-din Yazdi, however, notices the existence of boat bridges also across the Jhelum.[62]

Currency and Weights

The monetary system of Kashmir as prevailing during the Hindu period continued to be in vogue throughout the rule of the Sultans, the Mughals and the Pathans, varying no doubt in the type and weight of the individual coins issued by various kings from time to time. Similarly the use of paddy as a medium of exchange or subsidiary currency remained intact.

The coinage under the Sultans consisted almost entirely of copper, the coins being called *Puntsu* or *Kasera*. But the actual unit of the monetary system was the *cowree*, which was used for fractional payments or minor purchases.[63]

Some notable features of the coins issued by the Sultans of Kashmir are their shape and size. They are all square, and have the same kind of legend on the reverse, namely, *Zarb-i-Kashmir*. The weight of the silver coins varies from 91 to 96 grs and of copper averages about 83 grs. Some of the coins are in brass. On some the dates are given in figures as well as in words, but they are crude in construction and confusing in chronology. Instead of Sultan as in the designation of the descendants of Shah

61. *Tuzk-i-Jehangiri, ii,* 147.
62. *Zaffar-nama,* p. 179.
63. Srivara,p. 101' Stein. Trs. of *Rajatarangini,* II,312.

Mir, the Chak surname is given as Badshah, perhaps in imitation of the Mughals. According to Rogers, Zain-ul-abidin is the only Sultan who calls himself *Naib-i-Amir-ul-Muminin.*

The process of deterioration in the copper currency of Kashmir which set in originally during the time of later Hindu kings, was carried further under that of the Sultans. We have in fact a distinct record in a passage of Srivara's Chronicle[64] (iii-214), wherein he relates that in the reign of Hassan Shah (1472-84 AD) "owing to the exhausted state of the treasury the old copper *Panchavimsatika (Puntsu)* or `twenty-fiver' was somewhat reduced in weight." He also mentions that when this Sultan found that the *dinaras* of Toramana had ceased to be current, he issued a new coin *dvitinari* made of lead which was impressed with the figure of Naga.

It appears that under the Chaks, silver and gold coins were more in use than under the Shah Mirs. This can be accounted for by the close situation that Kashmir had to the Mughal empire.

The Kashmir currency which remained unchanged in its essentials throughout the Muslim period consisted of *dinara, bahagani, puntsu, hath, sasun, lakh* and *crore.* Their relative value as given in the *Ain-i-Akbari* may be tabulated as

12	*dinars*	=	1 *bahagani*
2	*bahagani*	=	1 *puntsu*
4	*puntsu*	=	1 *hath*
10	*hath*	=	1 *sasun*
100	*sasun*	=	1 *lakh*
100	*lakh*	=	1 *crore or* 10,000,000 *dinaras*

In addition to these there were other types of coins also like *ashrafis* and *tankas,* as is clear from a passage in the Chronicles regarding the erection of a *Khanqah* by Sultan Muhammad Shah's queen. But these coins were apparently imported from India and must have been in circulation side by side with indigenous coins.

Coins of Sultans and Chaks

The earliest coins of the Sultans still extant are those of Sultan Sikandar. As already mentioned they are very inartistic, "Kashmiris", as Rogers observes, "being the worst die-sinkers of the world".[65] Moreover, they are not helpful in fixing the dates of the rulers, partly

64. Stein, trs. of *Rajatarangini.* Vol.II,page 312.
65. J.A.S.B.lxv (1886), p. 223.

because the dates in a large number of coins is not legible, and partly because the same date is employed by successive rulers.

The copper coins which are very common are not also legible. They are round in shape with an average diameter of .8" and weight varying from 71 to 100 grams. The obverse has a bar (a line across the middle of the coin) with a central knot of arabesque design, The knot in some cases is elaborate; in others it consists of a carelessly formed circle. the name of the king is written below the bar, but above come the words *Sultanul-Azam*. Except in the case of Zain-ul-abidin, the word *Shah* is invariably added to the name. The reverse is occupied completely with *Zarb-i-Kashmir* and the year is added in Arabic.

Sultan Zain-ul-abidin made a notable departure in coinage, in that he also issued coins in brass. He had thus copper, brass and silver coins. But unlike his silver coins which have the date 842 AH, his copper coins bear 841 and 851. What these signify is impossible to say.

The coins of the Chaks follow the same pattern as that of Sultans but we find a larger number of silver coins in circulation. The coins of Hussain Shah Chak bear 970 AH which signifies the year of his accession. The coins bearing the name of Ali Shah Chak must have been minted by his son Yusuf Shah because the dates they bear range from 987 to 990 AH. Like the copper coins, the silver coins of Hussain Shah, Ali Shah and Yusuf Shah bear the dates in Persian.

"On the obverse the silver coins have the inscription *Zarb-i-Kashmir*, enclosed within a lozenge-shaped border of wavy lines, and the date is inscribed in the segments outside the lozenge. The reverse contains the name of the king with his title. The Chak rulers call themselves Padshah and Ghazi, but in addition, each ruler adopts a separate title.

The number of gold coins of Sultans and Chaks so far discovered is very small. Their weight is about 175 grs and follow the same pattern in design and die as the silver ones. There are, however, variations in legends and titles used by different rulers.

Mughal and Afghan Coins

Among the extant coins of the Mughals minted at Srinagar there are some bearing the name of Islam Shah Suri, which must have been issued by some of the rivals of Mirza Dughlat in anticipation of Islam's success in his invasion of Kashmir. We also find some coins bearing Humayun's

66. Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, p. 293.

name, minted no doubt under orders of Mirza Dughlat. Again, Rogers came across Akbar's coins struck in Kashmir as early as 1557 AD and another one of 1579 AD. This shows the earlier attempts of the Mughals in bringing the Valley under their hegemony through the machinations of their stooges and partisans in Kashmir itself.

Akbar had a fine currency in gold and silver. Srinagar retained its seat as mint-town under the Mughals. The monetary value of the local smaller coins with that of the standard Mughal coins as given by Abul Fazal was : 1 *hath* ("hundreder") = 1 copper *dam* of Akbar. The *Sasun* or "thousander" was the equivalent of 10 *haths*, and must hence be reckoned as 10 *dam*, or one-fourth of a rupee of Akbar. The *lakh*, as its name shows, was equal to 100 *sasun* and accordingly represented the value of 1000 *dams*.

The Afghan rulers made no departure from the Mughal coinage. We have, however, the unique coinage of Atta Muhammad Khan, the Afghan Governor (grandson of Shah Wali Khan, Wazir of Ahmad Shah Abdali) who after declaring himself independent issued coins in the name of the patron-saint of Kashmir, Sheikh Nur-ud-din Rishi. There is a handsome silver coin weighing 224 grs, the only piece of this weight in the entire Durrani Series. Five double *mohars* of a beautiful design were struck later. In the central square on the flowered field on the obverse is the legend bearing the saint's name and on the reverse is a couplet in his praise. This was perhaps the only time when Kashmir had the coinage representing a republican rule — without mention of any king or chief in the legend.

The units of weight and measurement during the Muslim period did not undergo any change and confirmed to those prevailing during the Hindu period. Akbar, however, fixed the unit of weight as *man* which was divided into 40 equal parts, called *seer*. The *man* of Akbar was not, however, equal to our maund, but to 56 lbs only. Though the *seer* and its subdivisions were the standard Mughal weights, all the weighing in Kashmir were done in *Kharwars* and *Traks*, a *Kharwar* being equal to 3 *man* and 8 *seer* (Akbarshahi). Even the payments in cash were calculated in *Kharwars* of paddy; and so were the measurements, a *Trak* of land being equal to one-fourth of an acre.

Floods and Famines

"Fate", philosophises the Chronicler Srivara, "augments the happi-

67. *Rajatarangini II*, p. 116

ness of men by increasing the crops, and Fate also brings calamity to them in the shape of a famine. The clouds that make the grass grow by rain, also destroy it by the weight of snow."

These words truly reflect the feelings of the common man in medieval Kashmir with regard to the occurrence of natural calamities like floods and famines which often struck the Valley, and which were considered to be beyond the capacity of man to fight against. Living in a secluded valley where in the event of a failure of crops due to drought, floods or untimely snowfall, it was difficult to obtain grain from neighbouring territories, one could not but give up hope and resign oneself to the mercy of Fate. No wonder floods, and prolonged famines took an alarming toll of life and property and adversely affected the economy of Kashmir all along its chequered history.

The Valley is practically independent of rains. A fairly hard winter stores sufficient snow on the mountains to keep, with a gradual thaw through the summer, the irrigation canals constantly brimming: and this is all that is wanted to ensure an abundant harvest. But the contour of the land makes the cup-shaped Valley liable to floods and consequent famines. whenever abnormal summer rains melt the snow and bring it down in torrents to the Valley below, a flood ensures, destroying the crops. Or there may be an early fall of snow in October resulting in the golden harvest being swept off and throwing the country into the jaws of starvation and death.

Frequent occurrence of famines moved the rulers of the time to devise ways and means for meeting an emergency of this nature. It was perhaps in persuance of this that part of the land revenue was realised in kind, the grain being stored in granaries and sold to or distributed among the people at controlled rates from time to time. As a precautionary measure against famines, a part of the grain stock, sufficient to feed the people for a year, was laid in and it was only when there was a failure of crops in successive years due to fire or earthquake or when the government stocks of grain were accidently destroyed that there was widespread distress and heavy loss of life.

Some enlightened rulers took positive steps to prevent the occurrence of famines by implementing flood protection projects. We have already seen how effective these were in the time of Avantivarman. But the succeeding period of anarchical conditions destroyed the good work done by this ruler, and hence the helpless plight of the people, and their resignation to the mercy of Fate during the visitation

of a natural calamity. However, under the exceptionally long and peaceful rule of Zain-ul-abidin, flood protection measures were again implemented and to increase the agricultural production more land was brought under cultivation by providing irrigation facilities.

By the time the Mughals brought the Valley under their rule, Kashmir had passed through several devastating famines, but the emperors who for strategic and other reasons built the Pir Panjal road, and linked the Valley with the rest of India, did not find it difficult to reduce their intensity by importing grains. Shah Jehan, for instance despatched large qualities of grain from the Punjab for the famine-stricken people of Kashmir.

It was in 1344, the second year of Sultan Alau-ud-din's reign that untimely rains and snow destroyed the crops, which caused a severe famine, in which a large number of people perished. Sixteen years later, in 1360, when Sultan Shihab-ud-din was on the throne, the Valley witnessed a devastating flood "troubling his subjects grievously....There was not a tree, not a boundary mark, not a bridge, not a house that stood in the way of the inundation, which it did not destroy".[68] In order to prevent such a calamity befalling his capital again, the king built a beautiful town, Laksmipura, near the high ground at the foot of the Hari Parbat hill naming it after his queen, Laksmi.

Towards the end of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin's rule, in 1460 AD a severe famine occurred in Kashmir due to an untimely fall of snow. "The Valley was beautified with the *shali* (paddy)," records Srivara, "when snow fell in the month of October and caused distress... The ripe *shali* crop which had gladdened the hearts of men was covered with snow, even, as men of learning and merit are covered with sandal paste in an assembly of the wicked and ignorant."[69] The monster Famine soon entered the land and "there were emaciated men distressed for want of food, oppressed with hunger, and with inflamed eyes" to be seen roaming about the land in search of a morsel of food. People lived on edible leaves, roots and fruits, "as if they had taken some religious vow." A *Kharwar* of paddy which was ordinarily sold for 200 could not be obtained even for 1,500 *dinaras*.

The king immediately undertook relief measures. Camps were set up all over the Valley where the people were served with free meals prepared of the rice from the king's reserve stocks. "After he had fed his distressed subjects for a few months like his children," gratefully

68. Jonaraja, *Kings of Kashmir*, p. 41.
69. *Kings of Kashmira*, p.117.

acknowledges the Chronicler, "a plentiful crop grew" and normal conditions returned to the land. The anti-social elements like usurers and black marketeers were severely punished and compelled to return the precious articles to the owners who, oppressed by hunger, had exchanged them for grain at abnormal rates during the famine. The debts incurred by the people in distress at high rates of interest were cancelled by the king. "Out of humanity the king cancelled the deeds on *burja* (birchbark) leaves drawn up between the creditors and debtors."

Two years later, in 1462, the Valley witnessed a severe flood when "the buildings in the city drowned themselves in water as if to avoid the sight of the distress of those who had raised them."[70] Fortunately the standing crops were not quite ripe and the stems being still strongly rooted, were not affected by this inundation. But apprehending the recurrence of a similar disaster, the king built his new city of Srinagar at the foot of the Hari Parbat hill now known as Naushahar locality. He also repaired the protective embankments which had been originally raised by Suyya in the ninth century AD and similarly deepened the bed of the river Jhelum at Baramula for a speedy discharge of flood waters from the Valley.

Man, no less than Nature, was also responsible for a number of famines. In 1532, Mirza Haider Dughlat's army of 5,000 horse entered Kashmir, carrying fire and sword to its villages and towns. The people, however, rose in a body and launched a guerrilla war against the invader. The whole winter passed in warfare and peace was concluded in the month of July. The land could not be cultivated and famine was the result which lasted two years, taking a heavy toll of life.

In 1576, during the reign of Ali Shah Chak a devastating famine took the Valley in its deadly grip. Snow fell in the month of September and destroyed the rice crop, resulting in a famine which lasted three years. Its ravages wiped off more than half the population of the Valley by death and emigration, and many cases of cannibalism are recorded in the annals of the times.

It was during the reign of Akbar that famine relief was organised on governmental level following the occurrence of the great famine of 1598-99, which resulted from untimely rains destroying the crops. The severity of the famine was aggravated by the influx of the emperor's large retinue. Thousands of maunds of foodgrains were imported on the orders of Akbar, from Pakhli, Bhimber and Western Punjab. Nearly a

70. Ibid, p.119.

lakh of people were fed daily at the Idgah. Extensive public works like building of a fort, roads and canals were undertaken to provide employment to the starving population.[71]

During Jehangir's reign, in 1615, an epidemic of plague occurred in the Valley. the emperor speaks of its ravages very touchingly in his *Memoirs:* "On this day a report of the chronicler of events arrived, stating that plague had taken firm hold of the Valley (Kashmir) and that many had died. In the house where one person died all the inmates were carried off. Whoever went near the sick person or a dead body, was affected in the same way. Things had come to such a pass that from fear of death fathers would not approach their children and children would not go near their fathers."

Nothing could, however, be done by human effort to fight this epidemic as no remedy was available. It, however, subsided by itself after a few weeks, but not before a few thousand people fell as its victims.

The severity of the famines was considerably reduced by the opening of the Valley to the outside world by the Mughals who built two roads over the Pir Panjal and Jhelum valley passes. Construction of a

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71. The Portuguese priest Pieru du Jarric, who has given us an interesting account of Akbar, relates the experiences of two priests, Father Hierosme Xavior and Benoist de Gois who accompanied Akhar to Kashmir.

"Whilst they were in the kingdom of Caximir there was so grievous a famine that mothers were rendered destitute, and having no means of nourishing their children, exposed them for sale in the public places of the city. Moved to compassion by this pitiable sight, the Father bought many of these little ones, who, soon after receiving baptism, yielded up their spirits to their Creator. A certain Saracen, seeing the charity of the Father towards these children, brought him one of his own; but the Father gave it back to the mother, together with a certain sum of money for its support; for he was unwilling to baptise it, seeing that, if it survived, there was little prospect of its being able to live a Christian life in that country. At day-break the next morning, however, the mother knocked at the door of his lodging, and begged him to come to the house and baptise the child, as it was about to die. Accompanied by some Portuguese, he went with her to the house and baptised the child, having first obtained the consent of its father. The latter, after it was dead, wished to circumcise it, but this the Father would not permit, but buried it with Christian rites. There was another mother, a Mahomedan woman, who brought to him, under similar circumstances, her infant son to be baptised; and in this case, too, as soon as the rite had been performed, the spirit of the little sufferer ascended to heaven."

—*Akbar and the Jesuits,* p. 78.

number of *serais* or travellers' rest-houses at various stages on the roads and the appointment of permanent staff to look after their maintenance, reduced the hazards of the journey. Consequently grain and other commodities could be imported with ease in an emergency.

This was evident in 1638 when during a visit of the emperor to the Valley, unprecedented floods devastated a large part of Srinagar and caused enormous damage to the standing crops in the countryside. A severe famine followed in which thousands of people died. The death-toll would have been heavier had not Shah Jehan personally organised relief by sending grain from the Punjab and having it distributed among the starving population.

Eight years later a similar calamity befell the people again, and again Shah Jehan despatched huge quantities of grain from Sialkot, Lahore and Gujrat. Yet another famine due to drought caught the unfortunate Valley in 1651. He, in order to supervise the despatch of grains from the Punjab, cut short his visit after having spent only two months in the Valley. He entrusted the fair distribution of the grains to an efficient officer, Nawab Said Ullah Khan.

Several visitations in the nature of famines, fires and epidemics overtook the unfortunate Valley during the rule of the later Mughal emperors, but the severe famine of 1746-47 beat all records in its heavy toll in human misery and death. For some time earlier to the black year, the chaotic conditions prevailing in the Valley due to insecurity, and the incursions of Khakha and Bomba raiders, had interfered with the proper tillage and irrigation of rice fields and this, coupled with the complete failure of government machinery and excessive rains in the spring, prevented the distressed cultivators from attending to the sowings. Later in the summer there again occurred a flood which swept off what little crops had been grown. The loss was all the more unfortunate because the reserve food stocks had already been exhausted during the preceding years of scarcity and political unrest. The weakening of the authority of the Central Government precluded the import of grains from the Punjab and neighbouring territory. No wonder that the severe famine wiped off more than three-fourths of the population of the Valley through death, emigration and disease.

Recurrence of famines continued during the Afghan rule in Kashmir. As a result of untimely rains and exactions levied earlier by the first Afghan governor, Abdullah Khan Ishk Aqasi, there was a severe famine in 1755. Fortunately an able administrator, Abul Hassan

Bandey, the minister of Raja Sukh Jiwan, the Afghan governor of Kashmir, rose to the occasion. He distributed in an equitable manner the corn stored in the State granaries and thus saved the population from death by starvation. He wisely husbanded a portion of the grains for next year's seed. But unfortunately the next crop was also a failure and the scarcity conditions continued for two years more.

Towards the end of the Afghan rule, a severe famine hit the Valley and the then revenue farmer, Pandit Birbal Dhar, unable to realise the government dues from the famine-stricken cultivators ran in arrears for which he was harassed and reprimanded by the governor, Sirdar Azim Khan. To escape the wrath of the fierce governor he fled the land and taking refuge under Maharaja Ranjit Singh induced the latter to mount an invasion of Kashmir and annex it to his dominions.

Position of Women

The advent of Muslim rule towards the middle of the 14th century, did not produce an immediate change in the position of woman in society, since for a considerable time there was nothing to distinguish a Hindu from a Muslim in dress, manners and customs. But after Kota Rani's death, we find no mention of any queen who wielded authority or owned property in her own right. We miss the presence of the queen at the time of a Sultan's coronation. True there are accounts of queens who made religious endowments, established schools and other charitable institutions, but these are only few and far between.

Slowly the purdah or seclusion of women became a common practice among the upper classes, and the woman's right place was considered to be her home, and her most sacred duty obedience to her father and brother and husband. This naturally led to the institution of the harem in the case of the more prosperous and respectable classes of society.[72] It must not, however, be supposed that polygamy or the keeping of concubines was a common practice. This sort of luxury could be afforded only by a privileged few. In most cases the harem was no more than a separate living quarter for the womenfolk of the family. Purdah was, however, unknown among the women of lower classes, especially in rural society, who moved about freely without a veil, doing outdoor work, helping their husbands in the fields, in the gardens or on the river.[73]

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72. M.W. Mirza, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 608-09
73. Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, p. 227.

Bernier records that these women moved about freely, but those of the nobility remained behind purdah. To have a look at the inmates of the zenana, he would follow richly dressed elephants through the streets. As these elephants passed along, the sound of the silver bells with which they were adorned would attract the attention of the women inside the house, who would crowd to the windows to see the spectacle.

Wherefrom the purdah entered into Kashmir is difficult to say. With the growing influence of the Sayyids from Persia and Central Asia, the purdah became common not only among the upper classes of Muslims but of Hindus as well. During the Mughal and Afghan periods the system became more rigid, but be it said to the credit of the women of the common folk, it did not make any progress among them and they continued to lead a free and healthy life through times of peace or turmoil.

Education does not seem to have been widespread among women of medieval Kashmir. There are no doubt instances of women of the well-to-do families receiving education as, for instance, the careers of Sura, Hayat Khatun, Gul Khatun, etc, would illustrate, but the women of the general mass of people could neither have the time nor money to receive proper education in private schools or institutions endowed by kings and queens. The life of Habba Khatun, however, shows that opportunities were not wanting even for peasant girls to acquire knowledge. In music and dance, in spite of the religious taboo, women artists appear to have become "proficient and possessed a genuine ardour for song."[74]

Marriage of their children was arranged by the parents. We have instances of inter-marriages among Hindus and Muslims, and when the Muslims took Hindu wives, they allowed them to retain not only their Hindu names but also their faith. This practice was also common in Rajauri, Ladakh and Baltistan.[75] It was Jehangir who put a stop to this practice. Bernier records that Kashmiri women being very beautiful and fair, "it was from this country that nearly every individual when first admitted to the court of the Great Mogol, selects wives or concubines, that his children may be whiter than the Indians and pass for genuine Mogols."

The custom of marrying boys and girls at an early age among both Muslims and Hindus came into vogue during the rule of the Afghans. "An Afghan would not molest a married woman, however

74. *Kings of Kashmira* p. 133.
75. *Tuzk-i-Jehangiri*, ii-181.

pretty. So the only remedy to save the person and honour of a woman was to marry her young."[76] This evil practice continued beyond the Afghan rule until its prohibition by law during recent years. Under the Afghans who subjected the people in general to great hardships, women became the special targets of their licentious behaviour. Kashmiri women, irrespective of caste or creed, were "physically and spiritually shattered; their presence in every sphere of social activity was totally eclipsed."[77]

Prostitution seems to have been prevalent throughout the medieval period. But except for Sultan Haider Shah and Sultan Hassan Shah who were fond of the society of women and had large harems, the other Sultans led a moral life. Their example was followed by their courtiers. A Muslim is enjoined by religion not to have more than four wives at one time and for that too strict conditions have been laid down, and no Sultan seems to have exceeded the prescribed limit.

The practice of sati which was common under the Hindus was stopped by Sultan Sikandar who considered it un-Islamic, and though these restrictions were later removed, the practice seems to have lost its importance. Jehangir was struck with horror when he found Muslim windows of Rajauri and other Jammu states, being buried alive with their dead husbands, and he forthwith stopped it.

But though woman had considerably lost her position and privileges during the Muslim rule, yet Islam conferred on her the rights denied to her by the Hindus. For example, she gained the right of divorce and of inheriting a portion of her father's property. A Muslim widow also got the right to marry again. Sultan Alau-ud-din, however, promulgated a law that no unchaste childless widow should have any share of her husband's property from her father-in-law. Hindu women, however, continued to be governed by their personal laws.

Standard of Life

The spread of Islam to Kashmir, apart from bringing about a marked change in the social structure and religious composition of the people, had also far-reaching economic consequences. The insecurity of life and property which followed the civil wars and instable administration under the later Hindu rulers, had paralysed trade and commerce and

76 Pandit Anand Koul, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, p.33

77. Prem Nath Bazaz, *Daughters of the Vitasta*, p. 16

discouraged the farmer from applying his energies to agricultural pursuits. Consequently the standard of life of the common man had fallen so low as to have touched the starvation level.

With the accession of the Shahmir Sultans hope returned to the agriculturist and the trader. The early Sultans, like Shihab-ud-din and Qutb-ud-din, endeavoured to give a stable administration and patronised arts and industries. Zain-ul-abidin's rule was the goldern age of Kashmir and the kingdom acquired fame as one of the prosperous regions of India.

Unfortunately this prosperity could not be maintained under the weak and intolerant rule of later Sultans and Chaks when the kingdom fell a prey to internecine warfare and base intrigues among the leaders and ministers for the loaves and fishes of office. The kingdom thus presented itself as an easy and inviting prey to the Mughals who after its conquest, however, restored its shattered economy for nearly a century. Under the later Mughal emperors and Afghans, the clock was again put back and Kashmiris were the victims of tyranny and oppression. The standard of life fell and the "villages were half deserted, and the few inhabitants that remained wore the semblance of extreme wretchedness."

Food and Drink

Rice was, as always, the staple food of the people and hence a failure of the paddy crop invariably resulted in a famine. Rice was cooked in many ways, but the common practice was to boil it and to keep a portion overnight for the next morning's meals. With the influx of Persian Sayyids and Central Asian nobles into the Valley, various kinds of rice like pilau were introduced. Wheat does not seem to have been popular, and barley was regarded as a simple food, fit only for the poor or for those who renounced the world.[78] As during the Hindu period, meat, vegetables and fish continued to be important articles of diet of the people during the medieval period. Similarly the flesh of the fowl, ram, goat, and various other birds was commonly eaten. A favourite dish of the Kashmiris was to cook fowl and brinjals together. Spices of various kinds were used in cooking meat and vegetables. "At Ashrama," records Srivara, "the king (Zain-ul-abidin) held the feast of rice, until flavour of the curries overcame the scent of the saffron."[79]

Fruit also formed a regular article of diet. Fruit which does not, due to difficulty of transport, seem to have been exported till the time of the

78. Srivara., p. 276.
79. Ibid., p. 140.

Mughals, was hence available in abundance. Firishta records that the owner of a garden and the man who had no garden were all alike, for the garden had no walls, and no one was prevented from plucking the fruits. "Savoury cakes" were served in feasts, as also milk and curds.[80]

The staple food during the Mughal period was rice, fish and various vegetables. "Though *Shali* rice is plentiful," remarks Adul Fazal, "the finest quality is not available." Wheat and *mung* were also cultivated as were watermelons and various vegetables on the floating gardens of the Dal. Mulberry was cultivated for feeding the silk cocoons and so its fruit was not eaten.

The Mughals were epicurean by temperament and were given to the pleasures of the table. They introduced their choicest cuisine and the Kashmiri cook learnt the preparation of *Goshtaba*, *Kabab* and *Rogan-josh*. Later the Afghans added their bread and pilau to his rich repertoire.

Drinking of wine appears to have been as popular under the Sultans as under the rule of Hindu kings. "The Muslims who participated in these festivals (of Hindus), also partook of wine. Most of the Sultans and their nobles too drank wine. Zain-ul-abidin took it in moderation, but Haidar Shah was a confirmed drunkard, and as a result neglected his State duties. Hassan Shah was in the habit of arranging drinking parties in his palace, or in the boats on the Jhelum and used to get drunk on these occasions."[81] Butter and milk were freely taken, but the chewing of betel leaves, so common with the Hindu rulers, appears to have gone out of fashion during the Muslim period.

Dress and Ornaments

The dress of the Kashmiris has undergone several changes during the course of their long history. Kalhana mentions that before the time of Harsa (1089-1101), the people of the land in general wore their hair loose, did not have a head-dress and did not wear a short coat, but a long tunic. Perhaps due to the influence of the Muhammadanised areas in Kandhara and western parts of the Punjab, Harsa introduced the use of the turban and short coat. This seems to have been the dress of the people at the time of the foundation of the Sultanate. With the coming in of the Sufi saints and Muslim theologians from Persia and Central Asia, Kashmiris adopted the long robe, and round turban. The former is thus the forerunner of the *Pheran*, the present dress of the Kashmiris. The robe was

80. Ibid., p. 143.
81. Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, p. 231.

mostly made of cotton and wool, but on festive occasions people wore silken garments too.[82]

The dress of the women resembled that of men, except that they had a fillet tied round their head, called *kasaba* in the case of Muslim, and *taranga* in the case of Hindu women. The Mughals are said to have encouraged the use of *Pheran* and of the *Kangri*, the portable firepot enclosed in a wicker case, to effeminate the hardy Kashmiris and to break their martial spirit. " The women wear a coarse, grey woollen garment, open from the neck to the waist. On the forehead they have a sort of red band, and above it an ugly, black, dirty clout, which falls from the head over the shoulders to the legs. Cotton cloth is very dear and their inborn poverty prevents them from possessing a change of raiment."[83] Owing to the cold climate of the Valley the Kashmiris took their bath at long intervals, and it was to provide them with hot water ablutions that Mirza Haider Dughlat introduced the construction of *hamam* or Turkish bath as an adjunct to the mosque. Jehangir in his *Tuzk* records that on account of poverty, a Kashmiri could not afford more than one *Pheran* which was replaced by a fresh one only when it was worn out. The common man wore the typical Kashmiri cap.

We have already noted the influence of Central Asia on the dress and ornaments worn by the Kashmiris during the Hindu period. The jewellery designs of the Valley were further enriched during the rule of the Sultans and the Mughals. Sultan Zain-ul-abidin's regal robes and ornaments "became famous for the various coloured threads that it contained."[84] The women wore earrings, nose drops and bangles.[85]

Fashions in ornaments changed with the advent of Mughal rule. Nur Jehan is said to have introduced more delicate varieties of jewellery in the Valley.[86] The love of the beautiful made the Kashmiris copy the ornaments of the Mughal nobility who had themselves borrowed these styles from Iran, Central Asia and the surrounding countries beyond Kabul. It appears that the beautiful *jhumka*, bell-shaped earrings, bracelets delicately traced with chenar leaf designs, necklaces composed of plaques strung on thread and set with uncut stones, and other varieties of ornaments, are all the result of a synthesis of the art of jewellers from all these countries. "The Kashmir goldsmiths are very

82. *The Kings of Kashmira*, p. 207.
83. Paelsart, op. cit.
84. Srivara, p. 151.
85. Ibid., p. 232.
86. Sufi, *Kashir*, Vol II, p. 581.

ingenious and, though their work has not that lightness so charming in that of Delhi, it has a peculiar style of its own.[87]

Houses

The plan and construction of houses throughout the Muslim period was the same as at present. They were built of timber, intersticed with stone and brick "and their style is by no means contemptible." Near the forests the walls were formed of uncut logs. Timber was preferred chiefly on account of its cheapness, as also for its ability to withstand severe earthquakes. When for instance, the town of Zainagir was destroyed by fire, Zain-ul-abidin "built it without delay, new and beautiful, with houses made of wood."[88] Mirza Haider Dughlat records that "in the town there are many logy buildings constructed of fresh-cut pine. Most of these are, at least, five storeys high; each storey contains apartments, halls, galleries and towers. The beauty of their exterior defies description, and all who behold them for the first time, bite the finger of astonishment with the teeth of admiration".[89] Adjoining almost all the houses were small compounds and vegetable gardens. The houses were mostly two to four storeys high and sometimes even more. The roofs which were sloping to throw off snow were constructed of planks laid over with sheets of birch-bark to make them watertight. A layer of loose earth was spread over the birch-bark to keep it in place. White and violet lilies and red tulip grew on these roofs, presenting a lovely sight in spring. The poorer people had their huts thatched with reeds or rice straw. For ventilation the better-class houses had pretty latticed windows. The ground floor of the poorer people was used to keep the cattle, the family living on the first and second floors. The loft served as a store for household chattel. Bernier mentions that in the city the better class houses were situated on the river banks with beautiful gardens attached to them.

The free use of timber in the construction of houses was responsible for the frequent conflagrations in the cities and towns which reduced them to ashes. The Chronicles mention the devastating fires which caused an immense loss to the people and exposed them to the rigours of cold. Jehangir was a witness to one of these calamities when a whole quarter of Srinagar was destroyed by fire. Its intensity was such that even though he tried to save the Jama Masjid the flames overwhelmed it. At

87. Ince, *The Kashmir Handbook.*
88. *Kings of Kashmira,* p. 156.
89. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi.* Trans, by Elias and Ross, p. 425.

the orders of the emperor the mosque was rebuilt under the supervision of the historian-architect, Malik Haider Chaudura.

Fairs and Festivals

A marked feature of the social life of Kashmir from ancient times has been the observance of festivals, both religious and secular, and the holding of fairs at various places in the Valley. This can be traced to the injunctions contained in the ancient *Nilamatpurana* which prescribes certain rites and rituals for propitiating the Pisachas, who otherwise would make it impossible for the Aryan settlers from the plains of the Punjab to stay on in the Valley during winter as well.

Among such festivals was that of Nagayatra. It was observed for thirteen days of the bright fortnight of Bhadun (August), and seems to have been celebrated both by the Hindus and Muslims of the Valley till as late as the reign of Jehangir. Sultan Zain-ul-abidin used to participate in the festivities "every year". On the fourth of the new moon in Bhadun, "the king fed the devotees for five days at Jayapidapura (modern Andarkot)." He made tanks here which were "filled with wine, cream and curries, and fed everybody." Thousands of enthusiastic merry-makers thronged the place and "out of his reverence for the devotees the king put up with the indecorous behaviour arising from intoxication which even ordinary men would not have borne." The fair continued till the twelfth day (Indradwadshi) of the bright fortnight when "the king dismissed the devotees after having laden them with quilts, attendants, money and walking staves."

On the thirteenth day of the moon was held the most popular festival, the Vethtruvah, which commemorated the day on which the source of the Jhelum was supposed to have been created by Siva. Veth is the Kashmiri name for the river Jhelum and Truvah the thirteenth of the month when the festival occurred. According to the ancient custom, the Jhelum in its course through the city and chief towns was illuminated with lamps on both its banks. Boats and barges with lighted tiny lamps glistening on their prows floated down the river. Sultan Zain-ul-abidin and his successors, down to Akbar and Jehangir, invariably participated in this festival which was celebrated by all the people irrespective of religion or caste they belonged to. Srivara, the historian, gives a graphic account of the festival in the following words:

> "On the thirteenth day of the moon the king wished to see the display of lamps made on the occasion of the worship held on account of the birth of the Vitasta; and he embarked on a boat and

went to the capital. While on the water he listened to well-composed songs, and at the time of embarking and disembarking he accepted the blessings of citizens. The display of lamps offered by citizens to the river looked graceful as if the spirits of number-less holy places had come to the Vitasta for adoration. The rows of lamps placed at the ferry on both banks looked beautiful, as if the Gods had scattered golden flowers for the worship of the Vitasta. The moon was reflected on the river, but trembled on the water as if overcome by superior beauty, and humbled by the lovely faces of the citizens' wives who came to make offerings to the Vitasta and to worship."[90]

These two festivals were held when the peasant, freed from the toil of tending the rice crop, hopefully waited for the harvest. The festivals of the spring-time were more lovely and colourful. The most popular was the festival of Chaitra (April) when fairs would be held in open fields and orchards. Surrounded by a riot of multi-coloured flowers, the revellers would listen to the music of singers and dancers. Here is what Srivara has to say about this festival in which the Sultan participated:

> "At the Chaitra festival, the king embarked on a boat, accompanied by his son, and with a view to enjoying the sport of flowers he went to Madavyarajya (Maraz). The line of the king's boats on the Vitasta looked like the row of Indra's chariots on the milky way. He started from Avantipura and stopped at royal palaces at Vijayesha and other places in order to witness dancing.... Young women, proficient in music, possessed of sweet voice, and with a genuine ardour for song, graced the place. The renowned Tara and the actors sang various songs to the *naracha* tune, and to every kind of music."

The Sultan who was fond of fireworks, for the manufacture of which he had imported men skilled in this art, encouraged their display by the people. On the Chaitra festival particularly "fireworks of various colours made by the mixture of charcoal powder, sulphur, and saltpetre pleased the men."

This spring festival continued to be popular throughout the Muslim period. In Srinagar the people flocked to the Hari Parbat hill to witness feats of archery and other athletic games. "The people besmeared themselves with saffron, aloes, camphor, and sandalwood paste on that day and looked beautiful." Hussain Shah Chak (1563-70) was a regular participant in this festival. Suka, the last Sanskrit Chronicler records that the king fixed on the appointed day a mark so high that it could not be

90. *Kings of Kashmira*, p. 124-25.

easily seen, and gave rich prizes in "elephant, horse and wealth" to him who succeeded in hitting the mark.

Following close on the Chaitra festival was that of Sripanchami, celebrated on the fifth of the dark fortnight of Vaisakha (May). A fair was held on the Sankaracharya hill in Srinagar. This festival was noted for its gaiety, and the people amused themselves in various ways. "Some", records Suka, the Chronicler, "held bouquets tastefully made of beautiful flowers to their noses; some were intoxicated and became uneasy when women, strangers to them, smiled; some drank wine and adorned their persons with flowers." Dance and music recitals were given, and the king gave away "clothes of gold and of silver" to the outstanding artists.

Desideri who visited Kashmir in 1714 also records that crowds of people ascended the Sankaracharya hill on a certain day to celebrate a festival.

The Sultans used to participate in a "festival of flowers" held in the district of Maraz.[91] During the Mughal times, the emperors particularly Jehangir and his charming queen Nur Jehan celebrated with their courtiers the festival of roses in their newly-built gardens by the Dal lake or under the chenar trees. Moore in his *Lalla Rookh* has immortalised the Feast of Roses,when it was

"all love and light,
Visions by day and feasts by night."

The Hindus celebrated their festivals as usual, barring of course during the years when religious persecutions were let loose upon them. During Sikandar's time they could not perform their religious rites freely and so was the case under the rule of most of the Afghan governors. But kings like Sultan Zain-ul-abidin and the Mughal emperors not only encouraged the celebration of religious festivals, but personally participated in them. When, for instance, the inmates of a monastery celebrated the festival of Shivratri or "the worship of vessels", Sultan Zain-ul-abidin "forgot his high rank and helped them in their worship."[92] The Hindus performed pilgrimages to holy places like the Ganga lake and Amarnath. During the civil war between Muhammad Shah and Fateh Shah in the middle of the fifteenth century, the Hindus, due to the disturbed and chaotic conditions prevailing in the Valley, were unable to deposit the ashes of their dead relatives in the Ganga lake at the foot of the Haramukh peak. But with the return of a short-lived peace, the then Sultan, Fateh

91. *Kings of Kashmira.* p. 195-245.

Shah, persuaded them to perform the pilgrimage and made arrangements for an armed escort to accompany the pilgrims. Nature, however, was against them and while "returning they were suddenly overtaken by storm and rain and perished to the number of ten thousand."[92]

With the spread of Islam, the festivals of Id-ul-Zuha attained great importance. The Sultan and the Mughal emperors who scrupulously observed the Ramadan fast attended the mass prayers at the Idgah. Sultan Zain-ul-abidin did not take meat during the month of Ramadan and his subjects followed suit.

The participation of some of the Muslim kings in Hindu and Muslim festivals not only shows their enlightened outlook on religion, but also their keen desire to identify themselves with the people in general. The fact that the festival of Vethtruvah was celebrated by all classes of people in as late a time as the reign of Jehangir when most of the population had already accepted Islam, shows the prevalence of religious and communal amity among the people of medieval Kashmir.

Pastimes

Among the games played during the medieval times, polo held a place of honour. Every town and city had a polo-ground called *chawgan*[93] and where there was none, the game was played in the main thoroughfare and watched by people from shops and windows. The game was perhaps introduced into Kashmir from Gilgit where it is still popular. Ali Shah Chak (1570-78) was very fond of the game and lost his life as a result of a fall from his pony while playing it at Idgah in Srinagar.

The game of the common people was the simpler version of polo — hockey. We have a reference to this game in a Saying of Lalleshwari, wherein she explains from a metaphor drawn from this game that instruction given to the foolish worldly man returns to the giver, as a hockey ball bounds back when it strikes a goal-pillar and misses the goal.[94]

There were other manly games too like single-sticks and fights with slings for the people to amuse themselves with.[95]

The favourite pastime of the royalty and of the nobles was hunting.

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92. Ibid., p. 348.
93. The open plateau near Kishtwar town is still called Chawgan.
94. Temple, *The Word of Lalla*, p. 208.
95. Lawrence, *Valley*, p. 255.

Sultan Shihab-ud-din was fond of hunting lions and tigers and on one occasion nearly lost his life while trying to kill one with his sword.[96] The Sayyids were very fond of hunting deer and of falconry. Sultan Hassan Shah (1472-84) took special pleasure in the latter sport and "his hawks brought down many birds as presents to the king."[97]

Besides these, the outdoor sports in which the people participated, particularly the martial classes, were archery, fencing and javelin-throwing. Among the indoor games dice and chess were popular.[98]

On festivals and social functions like marriage and childbirth, jugglers, folk dancers, and folk musicians entertained the people. From the time of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin display of fireworks was also an item of enjoyment. There were occasional concerts and musical events. The *bands* or Bhagats gave performances of open-air drama, portraying the city and village life in a most vivid manner.[99] Poetical symposia were also held now and then; and minstrels recited verses to the accompaniment of a guitar.

The Mughals who were given to the pleasures of life and who dressed up the beauty-spots of the Valley, encouraged by their example the 'eat-drink-and-be-merry' habits among the people of Kashmir. Abul Fazal in his *Ain-i-Akbari* writes : "the inhabitants go upon the lakes in small boats to enjoy the diversion of hawking. They have partridges, the elk is also found here, and they train leopards to hunt them......."

This gay spirit stood the people in good stead during the tyrannous days of later rulers. George Forster who visited the Valley in 1783, when it was ruled by an Afghan tyrant, Azad Khan, observes:

> "The Kashmirians are gay and lovely people, with strong propensities to pleasure. None are more eager in the pursuit of wealth, have more inventive faculties in acquiring it, or who devise more modes of luxurious expense. When a Kashmiri, even of the lowest order, finds himself in the possession of ten shillings, he loses no time in assembling his party, and launching into the lake, solaces himself till the last farthing is spent. Nor can the despotism of an Afghan Government, which loads them with various oppressions and cruelty, eradicate this strong tendency to dissipation; yet their manners, it is said, have undergone a manifest change since the

96. *Kings of Kashmira*, p. 45-46.
97. Ibid., p. 263.
98. Ibid., p. 338.
99. Lawrence, *Valley*, p. 256.

dismemberment of their country from Hindustan. Encouraged by the liberality and indulgence of the Mughals, they gave a loose to their pleasures and the bent of their genius........"

Conveyances

There was no material change in the form of conveyance used in the medieval times from that existing in the time of the earlier rulers. The pack-pony continued to carry the exports from and imports into the Valley. Kashmir raised horses and ponies on its vast meadows and Jehangir notes that the Kashmir-bred horses were fetching prices up to 1,000 rupees. But more important than the pony was the human back. It was for this that the system of levying *begar* or forced labour for the carriage of goods came early into vogue, and continued till recent times. Abul Fazal records that men were used for the carriage of heavy loads over the hilly country. Bernier who visited Kashmir in the train of Aurangzeb mentions that in spite of the fact that for a month before the royal camp reached Bhimber immense quantities of baggage and stores had been sent on, 30,000 porters were employed of whom 6,000 were required for the king alone.

There were only narrow tracks over the mountain passes and no roads fit for wheeled traffic. Ponies and men also served as carriers of goods from one part of the Valley to another. The river Jhelum and its numerous tributaries and canals served as the main highways of internal trade. All kinds of boats from the tiny *shikara* to the big cargo boats (*bahats*) plied on its waters. We learn from the *Ain-i-Akbari* that boats were the centre upon which all commerce moved. Perhaps the modern houseboat had its origin under Akbar who, disliking the shape of the boat on the Jhelum, ordered the construction of a thousand double-storeyed boats on the Bengal model and soon there was a floating city on water.[100] The boatmen who had accepted Islam in early medieval times, had to pay a tax according to age which continued to be levied throughout the Muslim rule.

The rivers were spanned by permanent as well as boat-bridges. We have already noted that under the Hindu rule there existed no permanent bridges. The first bridge on the cantilever principle was built by Zain-ul-abidin. In the hilly tracts the river was spanned by rope bridges generally formed of three cables made of twisted twigs. We have a mention of the existence of boat bridges in Sharaf-ud-din Yazdi's *Zaffar-nama*.

The upper classes travelled on litters carried by porters. The

100. Sufi, *Kashir*, P. 588-89.

kings and their harems travelled on elephants but these proved, due to narrow and steep tracks on mountain passes, very cumbrous. Bernier mentions an unfortunate accident having occurred to the ladies of the harem who travelled to Kashmir on elephants in the train of Aurangzeb. The foremost elephant, at a narrow point in the way, stepped back, forcing the elephants behind it off the path and down the hill-side. The ladies whom they were carrying escaped, but the elephants were abandoned to their fate.

Social Services

The department of religious affairs was under the Sheikh-ul-Islam. It maintained the mosques and provided imams and preachers with stipends or grants. It also subsidised the theological institution by giving grants to deserving scholars and teachers.

Educational institutions were mostly founded by pious donors who left large endowments for their maintenance. Monarchs, queens, nobles and traders vied with one another in promoting education, and the State helped the effort by its patronage of learning and scholars and artists and opened a number of schools. The first Kashmir Sultan, however, to establish *madrasas* or schools in different parts of the Valley was Shihab-ud-din. Sultan Qutb-ud-din set up a residential school and a university in his newly founded town of Qutbdinpura. It had a hostel attached to it where board and lodging were free for both teachers and pupils. Sultan Sikandar also opened many schools and founded a college and a hostel and attached these to the Jama Masjid which he had built.

The tradition of founding educational institutions was continued by Sultan Hassan. Gul Khatun the mother of the Sultan, Hayat Khatun his queen, Shah Begum the wife of his prime minister and nobles like Nauroz and Tazi Bhatt took great interest in education and established schools at their own expenses. Similarly, the Chak rulers who followed the Shahmir Sultans to the throne of Kashmir, patronized education and founded several schools. Hussain Shah, for instance, opened a college with a library and a hostel, which were also endowed.

The Mughals were great patrons of learning and many colleges and universities were founded by them in Kashmir. Dara Shikoh, for instance, established a college of Sufism and also an observatory in Srinagar.

The royal court also patronized physicians and the study of Ayurvedic and Unani systems of medicine. Sharya Bhatt, for example,

was Zain-ul-abidin's court physician. There also existed a number of hospitals in Srinagar as well as in larger towns. The Muslim kings also distributed large sums of money to the poor, and on festivals food was served to mendicants and the physically handicapped.

Besides, there were the *Ziarats* and *Khanaqahs* under the charge of Rishis and Sufis, which provided shelter and food to the needy in times of distress due to natural calamities like famines, fires epidemics. People turned to these for solace and succour.

It will be clear from a study of the political history of Kashmir during the medieval period that the standard of life deteriorated towards the end of the rule of the Sultans and also under the Chaks when Kashmir became a fertile ground for political intrigue and civil wars. With the opening up of the Valley after its conquest by the Mughals there was, however, an increase in trade and commerce and together with the settlement of land revenue, prosperity returned to the land. But with the decline of the power of the later Mughal emperors, Kashmir again fell into disorder, to be engulfed later by the tyrannical rule of the Afghans which reduced the people to penury and hardship.

It is, however, its art and culture and particularly the assimilation and synthesis of the various currents and influences which affected the land that has earned for medieval Kashmir a special distinction. Under the broad-minded and tolerant Sultans like Zain-ul-abidin, and cultured Mughals like Jehangir and Shah Jehan, Kashmir attained a high position as a centre of learning and art, and even the crushing burdens of political and economic slavery that the people had to bear later, did not succeed in wiping off their broad humanistic outlook on life, and they continued to keep alight the torch of religious toleration and high cultural values.

15

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

While the fascinating valley of Kashmir was yet under the rule of the Hindu Lohara dynasty and Kalhana was giving his final touches to his monumental history, the *Rajatarangini,* North-West India was witnessing the end of an era. The old order was changing rapidly with the advent of Muhammadan rule. Though the Islamic movement was of relatively recent growth, it was yet powerfully forcing itself on the ancient and firmly established social and religious institutions of the country. There was "a clashing of fundamental convictions, a conflict of realism with idealism, of the material with the visionary, of the concrete with the abstract." [1] New values were being set up in art and literature and a chain of action and reaction resulted in a slow and imperceptible synthesis of the two fundamentally opposite cultures.

Spread of Islam

Perhaps the best example of this synthesis is provided by medieval Kashmir which, as mentioned earlier, came under the influence of the new religion peacefully and was spared the violent birthpangs that ushered in the new order in the rest of the country. For over two centuries following Mahmud Ghazni's expeditions to north and west of India, Kashmir sealed itself up behind its mountain ramparts, secure against the attacks of the zealous armies of Mohammadan invaders. But cultural influences and ideas could not be shut out, howsoever high the enclosing walls might be. Islamic missionaries and adventurers carried the teachings of the new religion into the Valley. Most of these missionaries belonged to one or the other of the Order of Sufis from Persia and Bukhara. How these saints and their teachings influenced the already rich cultural heritage of Kashmir will be clear from a reference to the

1. Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Islamic Period),* p. 1

development of Sufism and its propagation in the Valley by devoted and selfless missionaries.

Islamic Mystics

Islam on coming into contact with Mahayana Buddhism in Central Asia and in some parts of Persia, could not but be influenced by its philosophic thought, and the devotion and ardour of its monks. The religious tolerance and harmlessness to all life as taught by its scriptures had a moderating effect on a good proportion of the followers of the new faith. It was, therefore, a matter of time when in the process of the synthesis of the two religions, there should evolve a new school of Islamic mystics — the Sufis.

By the end of the ninth century, Islam had begun to ossify itself into a system of formulas and observances and Sufism appeared as a reaction of the spirit against the letter. There was felt a need for a 'heart' religion and the Brahmanic Pantheism and Buddhistic Nihilism alike teaching the unreality of the seeming world, attracted the attention of the Sufi doctors, although their mysticism is less intense and practical but more airy and literary in character.

Mysticism, therefore,made great progress in Persia and assumed the character of a sect there. A certain Abu Sayyid was the first who advised his disciples to forsake the world and embrace a monastic life in order to devote themselves exclusively to meditation and contemplation; a practice borrowed from the Hindu and Buddhist religions. The disciples of Abu Sayyid wore a garment of wool (*Suf*) whence they received the name of Sufis.

Sufism spread more and more in Persia, the home of a people imbibed with the teachings of various Asiatic religions and was enthusiastically embraced by those who wished to give themselves up undisturbed to philosophical speculation. In its first form Sufism was quite compatible with Muslim dogma. It was satisfied to profess a contempt for life and an exclusive love of God, and to extol ascetic practices, as the fittest means of procuring those states of ecstasy during which the soul was supposed to contemplate the Supreme Being face to face. But by degrees, thanks to the adepts whom it drew from the ranks of heterodoxy, Sufism departed from its original purpose and entered upon discussions respecting the Divine nature which finally led to Pantheism. The increasing tendency towards Pantheism and ascetic practices are thus the main scope of Sufism. The former was the result of contacts and discussions

with the followers of Hindu philosophy and the latter was borrowed from Buddhist monkery in Central Asia. "The great movement of mysticism, in spite of the Greek and Indian origin of much of its philosophical skeleton and terminology, is the most significant genuinely Islamic contribution to the religious experience of mankind."[2]

Its principal argument was that God being one, the creation must make a part of His Being, since otherwise it would exist externally to Him and would form a principal distinct from Him, which would be equal to looking on the universe as a deity opposed to God. In their view, God is immanent in all things and is the essence of every human soul. There is not only no God but God, but no being, life or spirit except the being, life and spirit of God.[3] These doctrines shocked the orthodox Muslim opinion and in the reign of Moktadir, a Persian Sufi named Haltaj, who taught publicly that every man is God, was tortured and put to death.

Several of the chief dervish orders took their birth from various accomplished Sufis — Abdul-al-Jilani, who founded the Qadirya Order; Ahmad-ul-Rifai, the Rifaiya; Jalal-ud-din Rumi, the Mawaliya; etc. Rumi who was the most uncompromising Sufi was the greatest Pantheistic writer of all ages. Of the later Order may be named the Naqshbandya, which has been the most important in the Khanates of Turkistan.

There were too among the Naqshbandyas exercises in the restraint of breathing, strongly remniscent of the yoga exercises of the Hindus. There is much in common between the Saiva philosophy and Sufism. The cardinal doctrine of Sufis that all forms of religion are equal appealed to the intellectuals of the age.[4]

Sayyid Bulbul Shah

It was thus fortunate that Islam entered Kashmir from Central Asia, the land which owed so much to Kashmir in the realm of art and philosophy. The first name associated with the propagation of the new faith of whom we find a record in the annals of Kashmir, was Bulbul Shah. He appears to have deeply impressed the people by his personal example, his methods of preaching and persuasion, at a time when the fortunes of the ruling dynasty were in the melting pot and

2. Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam.*
3. Rev.R.Flint, *Ency, Britt.*,(10th Ed.) *vol.xxiii*, p. 242.
4. Temple,*The word of Lalla*

the people were passing through a period of political instability, heavy taxation, and crushing burdens of feudalism. Above all, he was responsible for initiating the new ruler into the fold of Islam and thus elevating it to the status of State religion.

Bulbul Shah or Sayyid Bilal Shah is said to have visited Kashmir first in the time of King Sahadeva, the predecessor of Rinchin. He was a widely travelled Musavi Sayyid from Turkistan, and was a "disciple of Shah Niamatullah Wali Farsi, Khalifa of the Suhrawardi *tariq* or school of Sufis founded originally by Sheikh Shihab-ud-din Suhrawardi.[5] The circumstances which led to the conversion of Rinchin to Islam have already been mentioned. Suffice it to say here that with this first success of his mission, Bulbul Shah acquired great influence in the Valley and very soon he effected the conversion of Rinchin's brother-in-law and commander-in-chief and several others to his creed. The first mosque was built at the place now called Bulbul Lankar, below the fifth bridge in Srinagar. Bulbul Shah died in 1327 AD and lies buried near the mosque. His lieutenant, Mulla Ahmed, carried on the mission till his death in the reign of Sultan Shihab-ud-din and is buried near the grave of his preceptor. The Mulla was made the first Sheikh-ul-Islam and is the author of two books, *Fataw-i-Shihabi* and *Shihab-i-Saqib.*

Sayyid Ali Hamadani

After Bulbul Shah came other Sufis, like Sayyid Jalal-ud-din of Bukhara; and Sayyid Taj-ud-din who arrived in the reign of Sultan Shihab-ud-din (1354-73 AD) and was accompanied by Sayyid Mas'ud and Sayyid Yusuf, his disciples. But the most prominent among the Sufi missionaries was Sayyid Ali Hamadani who "by his learning, piety and devotion, is said to have made 37,000 converts to Islam."[6] Known in Kashmir as Şhah Hamadan he may well be said to have practically established Islam in Kashmir and laid its foundations well and true.

The great Sayyid, also known as Amir-i-Kabir or the great Amir was born at Hamadan in 1314 AD. His geneology can be traced to Hazrat Ali through Imam Husain. Born in a family with traditions of scholarship and piety, Sayyid Ali learnt the holy Quran by heart while in his teens. He studied Islamic theology and learnt the secrets of Sufi doctrines and practices under the tuition of his learned uncle, Sayyid Alau-ud-din Simnani. Later he became the spiritual disciple of Sheikh

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5. Sufi, *Kashir,* p. 82.
6. Saadat, *Bulbul Shah,* pp. 7,23.

Sharaf-ud-din Muzdaqani who advised him to complete his education by extensive travels in foreign countries. For 21 years Sayyid Ali journeyed from one country to the other and came in contact with contemporary scholars and saints of note. When he returned home in 1370 AD he found that the political conditions in Persia had undergone a change during his absence and Timur who ruled Persia had unleashed a policy of repression against the Sayyids, forcing most of them out of the country. Sayyid Ali Hamadani accompanied by 700 more Sayyids, left Persia to escape the tyrannical rule of Timur and entered Kashmir in 1372 AD. Sultan Shihab-ud-din was the reigning king. The Sultan was at that time on one of his military expeditions against the ruler of Kabul and his brother, Qutb-ud-din had the honour of receiving the party of Sayyids and waiting upon them for four months, after which they left on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Seven years later (in 1379) Shah Hamadan again visited the Valley and stayed there for over two and a half years. He paid a third visit to Kashmir in 1387, but had to leave early on account of ill-health. While at Pakhli in Hazara district, he had a relapse and passed away in 1384. His disciples carried the dead body to Khutlan where it lies buried, A monument to the Sayyid stands at Pakhli, "of which", writes Babar in hid *Diary,*"I made the circuit (*tawaf*) when I came and took Chaghan-Sarai in 920 AH (1514 AD)".

Sayyid Ali Hamadani was a versatile genius, a great saint and a scholar. He wrote profusely on Sufism and elucidated several earlier works on the subject. Although a great authority on theology and philosophy, he did not disdain to write on such varied secular subjects as jurisprudence, political science and the science of physiognomy. Author of more than a hundred works on logic, ethics, and other subjects in prose, Sayyid Ali also wrote Persian poetry of no mean order. His odes are naturally Sufistic and his mystical poems illustrate his broad humanistic outlook on life and religion.

Sayyid Ali's visits to Kashmir, particularly the one in 1372 when he was accompanied by 700 Sayyids who had to leave Persia following Timur's invasion of that country and his decision to exterminate the Alavi Sayyids of Hamadan, had a profound influence on the spread of Islam in the Valley. A leader of the great Naqshbandya Order of Sufis, founded by his contemporary Khwaja Muhammad Bahau-ud-din Naqshband (1319-89) of Bukhara, Sayyid Ali Hamadani obtained great influence over the ruler, Sultan Qutb-ud-din. He was received with great warmth and respect and lodged along with his followers in a hospice in the Alaudinpura quarter of Srinagar. Some of his learned

followers visited the remote corners of the Valley and by their religious discourses effected the conversion of a large number of people to Islam.

Till then the new religion had not made any appreciable headway in the Valley, even though the Sultans had been its followers. The majority of the people being still Hindu, the Muslims had nothing to distinguish them in dress, manners and customs from their compatriots. In Alaudinpura, for instance there was a temple which was visited every morning both by the Sultan and his Muslim subjects.[7] To avert the recurrence of famines "the king performed a *Yagna* in the month of Bhadra, and distributed large gifts."[8] In contravention of the Islamic teachings he had two wives who were sisters. Sayyid Ali disapproved of these practices and in accordance with his advice, Qutb-ud-din divorced one of the sisters and retained the other. He also advised the Sultan to adopt the dress common in Muslim countries. However, "anxious not to antagonise his non-Muslim subjects, Qutb-ud-din did not follow every advice of the Sayyid, but he held him in great reverence and visited him every day. Sayyid Ali gave him a cap which, out of respect, the Sultan always wore under his crown. The subsequent Sultans followed the same practice until the cap was buried along with the body of Fateh Shah according to the latter's will."[9]

That Sayyid Ali Hamadani's deep scholarship and his spiritual attainments were responsible for the furtherence of the conversion of the Valley to Islam, goes without saying. He came in contact with the popular Saiva teacher Lalleswari and the great Sufi saint Sheikh Nur-ud-din, and had long discourses with them on spiritual and philosophic subjects. Lalleswari's accociation with Shah Hamadan was due to an identity of the faith of Sufis and Hindu mendicants and saints in Kashmir. The Sufis had charm of manners and attractive personalities and treating all religions alike they naturally preferred the faith to which they themselves belonged and which their patrons favoured. It was, therefore, natural that they should have influenced the people among whom they lived and worked and thus facilitated the peaceful propagation of Islam among the people in Kashmir.

Mir Muhammad Hamadani

Sayyid Ali Hamadani's work was continued with greater vigour by

7. *Fatahat-i-Kubrivi f.* 1470 a
8. Jonaraja, *Kings of Kashmira*, p. 53
9. Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, pp. 56-57.

his disciples and more particularly by Mir Muhammad Hamadani. Born in 1372, Mir Muhammad was only 12 years old at the time of his father's death, and his education in theology and Sufism was conducted under the prominent admirers and followers of his father — Khwaja Ishaq of Khutlan and Maulana Nur-ud-din Jafar of Badakhshan. He soon attained pre-eminence as a scholar and saint and arrived in Kashmir with 300 Sayyids when only 22 years of age. This influx of a large number of Sayyids into Kashmir was no doubt the direct result of the tyranny and self-assertion of first the Mongols and then of Timur. "They were attracted to the Valley owing to the peace that prevailed there compared to the social and political upheavals that were characteristic of Central Asia and Persia during this period. Moreover, they also came on account of the patronage that was extended to them by the Sultans."[10]

Mir Muhammad stayed in the Valley for about 22 years and then left to perform the Hadj pilgrimage. The presence of a large number of Sayyids, imbued deeply with the Sufistic doctrines and practices stimulated the tendency to mysticism among Kashmiris for which Saivism and Buddhism had already laid a foundation. This was mainly responsible for not only the adoption of Muslim faith by the general mass of people, but moulding their character and outlook on life on a humanistic and tolerant plane.

But not all the Sayyids who entered Kashmir during this time were devout Sufis. Many of them upheld the orthodox and puritanic views on Islam. In order to gain favours and privileges from the Sultans, they actively interfered with the politics of the State. This culminated in the narrow- minded religious policies adopted by Sultan Sikandar and his minister, Malik Suha Bhatt, who embraced Islam at the hands of Mir Hamadani. In contrast to the peaceful propagation of Islam by the earlier Sufis, through example and precept, Malik Suha Bhatt, with the active support of Sultan Sikandar, indulged in forcible conversion of Brahmins and wholesale destruction of their temples. A strong reaction during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin against this policy resulted in the proclamation of complete freedom of conscience and tolerance to all beliefs.

But the mode of conversion adopted by Suha Bhatt and Sikandar naturally brought about its own revenge, and reacted on their concept of Islam. The converts, and through them their leaders, were unable to resist the Hindu philosophy and trend of thought. This resulted in

10. Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, p. 221-22.

the emergence of a remarkable School or Order of Sufis in Kashmir — the Rishis — who wielded enormous influence on the religious and philosophical beliefs of the people, and moulded their mind and set up the ideal of religious tolerance and abiding faith in the grace of God.

Sheikh Nur-ud-din alias *Nand Rishi*

Foremost among them was Sheikh Nur-ud-din, the patron-saint of Kashmir. Revered alike by the Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir, Sheikh Nur-ud-din alias Nand Rishi, or Sahazanand, was born in 1377 AD at Kaimuh, a village two miles to the west of the important town of Bijbihara (ancient Vijayesa), 26 miles from Srinagar on the Jammu road. His ancestors belonged to a noble family of Kishtwar and had emigrated to the valley. His father, Salar Sanz, was a pious man and came under the spiritual influence of a Sufi saint, Yasman Rishi, who arranged his marriage to Sadra Maji. The child of their union was Nand Rishi, the great founder of the Order of the Rishis of Kashmir.

In his very childhood Nand Rishi gave proof of his saintly nature. He held himself aloof from the daily affairs of the family and though apprenticed to several trades, showed no inclination for any of them. Finally he gave up the world, lived in a cave for 12 years practising penances which reduced him almost to a skeleton. His fame as a saint and the glory of his spiritual attainments travelled far and wide, attracting to him a great number of followers. Though unable to read and write, he gave utterance to hundreds of beautiful Sayings which furnish the Kashmiri literature with gems having both a terrestrial as well as celestial meaning. Concise, and objective in their approach, they have been stamped in people's memories. They are collected and preserved in two volumes called the *Rishi Nama* and *Nur Nama;* but because of the transliteration in the Persian alphabet, many of them are not easily deciphered.

Nand Rishi exhorted his followers to perform good actions. That he said, was the secret of happiness in this world as well as in the life to come;

The dog is barking in the compound,
O Brothers! give ear and listen to(what he says):
"As one sowed, so did he reap;
Thou, Nand, sow,sow,sow!"

Of his experiences in a lonely cave where he led an austere life,

he says:

The cave seems to me to be a celestial castle;
The quilt seems to me to be a silken garment.
I play with the rats as if they were creatures of good omen to me.
One year seems to me to be one single hour.

He preached that all men should lead disciplined lives and none should fall a prey to worldly desires:

Desire is like the knotted wood of the forest,
It cannot be made into planks, beams or into cradles;
He who cut and felled it,
Will burn it into ashes.

Religious schisms were raising their head in his time and Nand Rishi warns the Kashmiris against the snares of false prophets in the following terms:

I saw a priest blowing out fire (and)
Beating a drum to others;
The priests have nice big turbans on their heads;
They walk about daintily dressed.
Dressed in priestly robes they indulge in mutton,
They run away with cooking pots under their arms.

He ridicules the pretentious nature of a priest, addressing him thus:

Thy rosary is like a snake;
Thou bendest it on seeing the disciples;
Thou hast eaten six platefuls, one like another;
If thou art a priest then who are robbers.

Nand Rishi also left what might be called a note on the state of the world to come:

During this Iron Age I found liars prospering;
In the house of the pious I found grief born of poverty.

He constantly advised the seeking of good company and shunning the bad, contrasting the two in forceful terms. He showed that rogues will always wrong the good, attacking them with dishonest words if one lacked in care and gave them such opportunities:

Spend thy days with the good —
The shah-wulga (one of the best kinds of rice) will get pounded,
Never go about with the wicked —

Do not walk close to pots covered with
soot (else thou shalt get soiled).

He also held that devotion to God lay in leading a disciplined life. It availed men nothing to carry out the rites and rituals of religion in a cold and mechanical manner.

Having washed thy face, thou hast called the believers to prayer;
How can I know, O Rishi, what thou feelest in thy heart, or what thy vows are for?

Thou hast lived a life without seeing (God);
Tell me to whom didst thou offer prayer.
If thou listeneth to truth, thou oughtest to subdue the five(senses)
If thou lowereth only the fleshy body, the fleshy body will not save thee;
If thou maketh union with Siva,
Then only, O Rishi Mali, will prayer avail thee.

Of true worship he says:

Do not go to Sheikh and priest and Mullah;
Do not feed the cattle on arkhor (poisonous) leaves;
Do not shut thyself up in mosques or forests;
Enter thine own body with breath controlled in communion with God.

Sheikh Nur-ud-din acquired enormous influence over the people of Kashmir and when he passed away at an advanced age, King Zain-ul-abidin himself was the chief mourner at his funeral. His grave at Tsrar Sharif is an object of pilgrimage, Kashmiris of all religions and communities flocking to it every year. The extent of the veneration in which his memory has been cherished may be gauged from the fact that nearly four centuries after his death, Atta Muhammad Khan, an Afghan governor, in order to win the sympathy and support of the people of Kashmir, struck coins in the name of Sheikh Nur-ud-din. No other saint perhaps in human history has ever had coins struck in his honour.

The Order of Rishis of Kashmir

During his lifetime Nand Rishi founded an Order of Rishis, and it is noteworthy that this Order had members from amongst Hindus and Muslims and commanded the respect and homage of all Kashmiris, irrespective of their caste or creed. Janak Rishi of Aishmuqam, Rishi Mol of Anantnag, Bata Mol, Rishi Pir, Thagababa Sahib of Srinagar, belonged to the same Order. The political, social and economic travail

and suffering through which the land had to pass, was considerably lightened by the comforting words and kind acts of these highly advanced souls. To them goes the credit of keeping the people firm to the ideals of love and toleration. They lived among the common people, shared their troubles and pains. No better tribute can be paid to them than that recorded by Abul Fazal:

> "The most respectable people of Kashmir are the Rishis who, although they do not suffer themselves to be fettered by traditions, are doubtless true worshippers of God. They revile not any other sect and ask nothing of anyone; they plant the roads with fruit trees to furnish the traveller with refreshments; they abstain from flesh and have no intercourse with the other sex. There are two thousand of these Rishis in Kashmir."

Jehangir was also impressed with their piety and utter self-abnegation. In his *Memoirs*[11] he speaks of these Rishis as possessing simplicity and though not having religious knowledge or learning, being without pretence. "They restrain the tongue of desire and the foot of seeking," continues he in his florid style,"and eat no flesh. They have no wives, and always plant fruit-bearing trees in the fields so that men may benefit by them, themselves desiring no advantage."

Every district and village had its *Asthan* where a Rishi took his abode and practised meditation. Their graves and relics are objects of respect and veneration to this day. The shrines attest to their founders' austerities and virtues. "Associated as they are with acts of piety and self-denial," observes Lawrence, "the *Ziarat* are pleasant places of meeting at fair time, and the natural beauty of their position and surroundings afford additional attraction. Noble brotherhood of venerable trees, of chenar, elms and poplar with its white bark and shimmer of silver leaves, gives a pleasant shade, and there is always some spring of water for the thirsty."[12]

Mir Shams-ud-din-Iraqi

An event of great importance in the spread of Islam in Kashmir was the arrival in about 1492 AD of a preacher from Talish on the shores of the Caspian, named Shams-ud-din Iraqi, who described himself as the disciple of Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh of Khorasan. His father was a Musavi Sayyid and it appears that he was converted to

11. *Tuzk-i-Jehangiri;* trans. by Rogers and Beveridge, Vol.II, pp. 149-50.
12. *The Valley,* pp. 207-8.

Nurbakhshi beliefs early in his life. He entered the service of Sultan Hussain Mirza Baiqara (1469-1506) of Herat and was sent by him as his envoy in 1481 to the court of Sultan Hassan Shah of Kashmir. For eight years he stayed in Kashmir and though prevented by the nature of his post to take an active part in the religious or political movements in Kashmir, nevertheless made a keen study of the people and their leaders. He even converted secretly two preachers to his faith, and having aroused suspicion among the orthodox *Ulama*, he was forced to leave Kashmir.

But it was in 1492 itself that he came back to Kashmir to carry on his religious mission.

Shams-ud-din, however, professed to be an orthodox Sunni like most of the inhabitants of the Valley, but the doctrine he preached was "conforming neither to the Sunni nor to the Shia creeds." The way that ultimately led to the preachings among, and converts from the people of Kashmir to the Shia sect, is the story of a constant struggle and strife among Sunnis and followers of Mir Shams-ud-din.

In fact, the Nurbakhshi movement was an offshoot of the Sufi cult prevailing in Persia, and its founder, Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh claimed to have seen the Divine Light and to have received the esoteric teachings of Ali through the Imam Jafar-i-Sadiq. Naturally the teachings of Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh had a tendency towards the Shia tenets, and Shams-ud-din Iraqi who was his follower reflected these while conducting his proselytising mission in Kashmir. With his eloquence and learning, he soon succeeded in converting a number of people to the Nurbakhshi sect, the most important person being Musa Raina, a powerful noble, who gave him money to carry on his work and also land at Zadibal, a suburb to the north of Srinagar, to build a *Khanaqah* on.

But in spite of the initial success, Mir Shams-ud-din had to face great obstacles. His patron, Musa Raina, soon fell from power and the influential Sayyid noble, Muhammad Baihaqi, the chief minister of Sultan Muhammad Shah drove him out of the Valley to Baltistan. There he continued his missionary activities and converted nearly the whole population to the Shia creed. After sometime when Musa Raina returned to power, he was recalled by the latter to Srinagar. As long as his patron enjoyed power, Shams-ud-din had the fullest support and cooperation from the government in his activities and it was then that he converted the turbulent Chak tribe too, thus giving a religious charac-

ter to the subsequent race for power between the Shahmir Sultans and the Chaks.

The first severe setback that the Nurbakhshis had was at the hands of Mirza Haider Dughlat. He was an orthodox Sunni and looked with disfavour on any departure from the letter of Islamic tradition or dogma. Besides it served his political ends to bring down his heavy hand on the Nurbakhshis and other Sufi sects, hoping thus to gain the support and goodwill of the orthodox Sunnis. He was thus able for some time to easily impose his rule and his Mughal officials on the people of the Valley. Writes he in great wrath and venom:[13]

> "At the present time in Kashmir, the Sufis have legitimatised so many heresies that they know nothing of what is lawful or unlawful. They consider that piety and purity consist in night watching and abstinence in food. They are for ever interpreting information regarding either the future or the past. They prostrate themselves before one another and, together with such disgraceful acts observe the forty days (of retirement). In short nowhere else is such a band of heretics to be found. May the most High God defend all the people of Islam from such misfortune and calamities as this, and turn them all into the true path of righteousness........"

> "Thanks be to God that at the present time no one in Kashmir dares openly profess this faith; but all deny it, and give themselves out as good Sunnis. They are aware of my severity towards them, and know that if any one of the sect appears, he will not escape the punishment of death."

But the spirit which animated the religious beliefs of Kashmir asserted itself soon and with the death of Mirza Haider Dughlat, several Sufi saints and Rishis carried on openly their activities all over the Valley. A noted saint who wielded a powerful influence on the masses was Sheikh Hamza Makhdum. Born in 1494 AD Sheikh Hamza studied under a well-known scholar of his time, Baba Ismail Qubravi, whose school stood at the foot of the Hari Parbat hill.

Sheikh Hamza was, however, forced by the Shia ruler, Ghazi Shah Chak to leave Srinagar. He established his seat in the village of Biru (about 20 miles from Srinagar on the road to Magam) and won a large number of disciples. In course of time he became unbearable, he blessed the mission of Baba Daud Khaki, his disciple, and Sheikh

13. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, p. 436.

Yaqub Sarfi, the learned theologian and poet, to Akbar's court to induce him to annex Kashmir to his expanding empire.

Both Sheikh Hamza and Baba Daud Khaki were responsible for converting a large number of people to Islam and also in setting up mosques in the Valley. Sheikh Hamza died in 1586 at an advanced age and lies buried on the south-eastern spur of the Hari Parbat hill in Srinagar. The tomb attracts large crowds who offer *Fatiha* to the Sheikh and some of his disciples who lie buried nearby.

Use of Force

It would, however, be wrong to assert that the spread of Islam in the Valley was throughout effected peacefully and without the use of force. Though the Valley had no conqueror like Mahmud, nor a warrior like Shihab-ud-din Ghori, nor a general like Muhammad bin Qasim, it had yet religious zealots like Sultan Sikandar, Sultan Ali Shah, Mirza Haider Dughlat, Yaqub Shah Chak, Mughal governors Itqad Khan and Ibrahim Khan, and most of the Afghan rulers. A close and careful study of the history of medieval Kashmir, however, reveals that persecution of non-Muslims by these zealots was resented by the majority of their Muslim subjects, who used to give shelter and solace to their compatriots in trouble. The people were conscious of the fact that in most cases this policy was born of political exigencies of these rulers who were experiencing difficulties in their career, and it did not reflect their respect for, or devotion to, the faith they professed. That the various religious communities bore no ill-will to one another, is proved by the political unrest in Kashmir during the 15th century when all the people, Hindu and Muslim, combined to give a fight to the Sayyids who had come from Iran and Turan and established their settlements in the Valley. Likewise the cruelties perpetrated by the Afghan rulers on Hindus to forcibly convert them to Islam, did not win them the sympathy or support of the Muslims of the Valley; instead they joined the Hindus in extending an invitation to Ranjit Singh to invade Kashmir and rid them of the tyrannical rule of the Afghans. Religious fanaticism and persecution of communities professing a creed other than the religion of the king, seems to have been the general trend in medieval times: witness, for example, the wholesale extirpation of Sayyids from Persia by Timur, the suppression of Sufis and Nurbakhshis in Kashmir by Mirza Haider Dughlat, and the constant feuds in Afghanistan between the Shia and Sunni sects. That the masses in Kashmir did not fall victim to this malady of the times is apparent from the tolerant

reigns of Sultans like Qutb-ud-din, Zain-ul-abidin, and Hussain Shah Chak.

Kashmir was the meeting place of two mighty traditions — the heart of India's monistic Wisdom-Religion, which was Kashmir Saivism, and *Erfan*, the "Wisdom of the Quran." The geographical situation of the Valley and the rich cultural heritage of its people were responsible for this unique development. In what manner the two religions acted and reacted on one another is an interesting study.

Hinduism

As mentioned earlier the Hindu religion and society before the advent of Islam, had been affected by Buddhism. If Kashmir Saivism was responsible for the development of Mahayana, Hinduism was no less influenced by the heterodox dogma of Buddhism and its denunciation of caste. The social fabric was thus loosened and many undesirable practices, like those of *Devadasi* and *sati*, became common. The religious beliefs were petrified into rigid Saiva rites and rituals conducted under the supervision of Brahmins. The latters' influence through their *parishads* or societies was being increasingly felt not only in religion but also in the policies of the State. Devaswamin the head of the Saiva sect, for instance, refused to admit Rinchin to the Hindu fold.

The Saiva cult became the predominant religion of the people and replaced the Vedic rites and rituals connected with birth, marriage and death of a Hindu. All the religious and philosophical books were in Sanskrit which, with the emergence of the popular Kashmiri language, became the domain of the privileged few, mostly of Brahmin caste. Since the latter also carried on the civil administration, there grew up slowly a stiff though silent opposition to this class among the general mass of the people. This was reflected in the bid for gaining popular support through the persecution of the Kayasthas and Brahmins by several Hindu kings.

No wonder the teachings of Islam as carried to Kashmir by the Sufis found a ready response from the general populace. By the time Shah Mir ascended the throne, there seems to have been a fairly strong Muslim community in Kashmir, and by the end of the 14th century the "adoption of Islam by the great mass of the population became an accomplished fact."[14]

14. Stein, Trans. of *Rajatarangini* Vol.1, p. 130.

But the Brahmins did not actively oppose the expansion of Muslim influence in the Valley, since "the administration remained as before in the hands of the traditional official class, the Brahmins, for whom a change of religion presented no advantage and who accordingly retained their inherited status, together with its literary traditions."[15]

With the growing influence of Iranian and Turanian Sayyids at the Kashmir Court, and the consequent encouragement of Persian language by the Sultans, the Brahmins were faced with the prospect of losing their privileged position. But with their quick adaptability they switched over to the study of the Persian language and literature in which they soon outshone the Sayyids. They had, however, to suffer persecution at the hands of Sultans Sikandar and Ali Shah who adopted this policy at the bidding of the Sayyid nobles. Most of the temples were destroyed by Suha Bhatt the newly converted minister of Sikandar and he,"with the leaders of the army, tried to destroy the caste of the people."[16] The Brahmins resisted forcible conversion by death, by flight to places in the rest of India, more particularly to the South. "The difficult country through which they passed," laments Srivara, "the scanty food, painful illness, and the torments of hell during lifetime, removed from the minds of the Brahmins the fear of hell. Oppressed by various calamities such as encounter with the enemy, fear of snakes, fierce heat and scanty food, many Brahmins perished on the way, and thus obtained relief."[17] Those, however, who could not leave the Valley "wandered about in Kashmira wearing the dress of the malechas".

Under Zain-ul-abidin's tolerant rule the Brahmins regained their power and prestige and occupied positions of trust and responsibility in his government. They took an active part in reviving the literary traditions of the land enriching it with the influences from Persian and Arabic science and literature.

The Mughal emperors treated the Brahmins of Kashmir with great respect and with the opening up of the Valley, they found a wider field for their talent. Many Kashmiri Brahmins rose to high political posts, as for instance Pandit Mahadeo and Chaudhri Mahesh in Kashmir and Jai Ram Bhan at Delhi. The Brahmins were no doubt victims of

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15. Ibid.
16. *Jonarja*, p. 60.
17. *Srivara*, p. 67.

religious persecution during the time of some Mughal governors, Itqad Khan for instance, but by and large they had a peaceful time throughout the Mughal period.

The Afghan rule was particularly harsh on them, but with their literary and political acumen, they produced several eminent administrators who won the confidence of even the most tyrannous of governors. For instance Dila Ram Quli was the chief minister of both Haji Karim Dad Khan and his son, Azad Khan, and "possessed a more liberal disposition than is usually found in an Indian........His deportment seemed uniformly benevolent to all classes of people. With his companions he was affable and good humoured. He was humane to his domestics and exercised with a reasonable temperance the duties of his office."[18]

All this shows that though the Brahmins had to face very rough times, they weathered the storm with their courage and faith. But this was made possible by the affection and solace they received from the general mass of the population who were Muslims. We have it on the authority of a Brahmin historian that many Muslims gave shelter to a large number of Hindus and kept them concealed in their houses till the dawn of better days.[19]

The most potent reason, however, for their survival as a distinct community was the preaching of the philosophy of Kashmir Saivism in Kashmiri by the great hermitess, Lalleswari.

Lalleswari —Forerunner of Medieval Reformers

As in the rest of India, the middle of the 14th century was a period of religious and moral ferment in Kashmir. Buddhism had practically disappeared from the Valley, though we find mention of Buddhist priests and *viharas* in the later Rajataranginis.[20] Tilakacharya, described as a Buddhist, was a minister of Zain-ul-abidin.[21] Most of the Buddhist theologians and saints finding the Valley uncongenial, had left for Ladakh and Tibet. The long period of political instability which followed the peaceful and enlightened reign of Avantivarman (855-83AD) was responsible for the ossification of the predominant religion, Saivism, into elaborate and complicated rituals which dominated all social and cul-

18. Forester, *Travels*.
19. Anand Ram Pahalwan, *History of Kashmir* (Persian).
20. *Srivara*, p. 202,284.
21. *Jonaraja*, p. 83.

tural activities. Saktism, born of the love for Durga worship, had degenerated into grotesque forms of rites and ceremonies. Vaisnavism was not a strong element in the religious fabric of the Valley, but in the 11th century it received further nourishment from the teachings of Ramanuja who travelled all the way from Madras to Kashmir to fight Saivism at its fountain-head. And with the destruction of temples and images by several Hindu kings like Harsa, as well as by Muslim zealots, Hindu worship was driven to the seclusion of the home or of 'natural' *(Svayambu)* images — rocks, or ice formations, or springs. Sanskrit became the domain of the learned few, the common man having taken to a form of Prakrit which though retaining its essentials, was yet wholly different from the 'Language of the Gods'.

For more than 200 years Islam had, in Central Asia and Persia, been similarly influenced by the teachings and dogmas of Mahayana Buddhism and Upanisadic philosophy, resulting in the emergence of a cult of Islamic mystics. Fortunately the new religion entered the Valley in this form, being carried there by enlightened Sufis like Bulbul Shah. With their humanistic approach to religion, they found a ready and sympathetic response from the Kashmiris, already permeated with the teachings of mystic saints and 'seers'.

For, it was during this period of religious ferment that a need had been felt for a new approach to religion embracing all creeds and castes and appealing to the 'heart' rather than the 'head'. Thanks to its rich religious and philosophic traditions, Kashmir rose to the occasion and produced a number of mystics and saints who by their teachings and their lives of complete self-abnegation were the living embodiments of true religion and morality.

Foremost among them was the great mystic 'seer', Lalleswari, popularly known as Lall Ded (Mother Lalla), who profoundly influenced the thought and life of her contemporaries and whose Sayings still touch the Kashmiri's ear, as well as the chords of his heart, and are freely quoted by him as maxims on appropriate occasions. She was born in about the middle of the 14th century of the Christian era in the time of Sultan Alau-ud-din. Lalla's parents lived at Pandrenthan (ancient Puranadhisthana) some four and a half miles to the south-east of Srinagar. She was married at an early age, but was cruelly treated by her mother-in-law who nearly starved her. This story is preserved in a Kashmiri proverb: *Whether they killed a big sheep or a small one, Lalla had always a stone for her dinner* — an allusion to her mother-in-

law's practice of putting a lumpy stone on her platter and covering it thinly with rice, to make it look quite a big heap to others. And yet she never murmured. Her father-in-law accidently found out the truth. He got annoyed with his wife and scolded her. This incident invited more curses on Lalla. Her mother-in-law poisoned the ears of her son against his wife with all sorts of stories. Ultimately, the anomalies and cruelties of wordly life led her to renunciation and she discovered liberty and equality in the life of the spirit.

She found her *guru* in Sidh Srikanth, whom she ultimately excelled in spiritual attainments:

Gav Tsatha guras khasithay,
Tyuth var ditam Diva
The disciple surpassed the Guru:
O God, grant me a similar boon.

She pursued yoga under Sidh Srikanth until she succeeded in reaching the 'abode of nectar'. But she did not stop there. All around her was conflict and chaos. Her countrymen and women needed her guidance. She had a mission to perform, and well and effectively she did it. Her life and Sayings were mainly responsible in moulding the character of her people and setting up the tradition of love and tolerance.

Eventually she gave up her secluded life and became a wandering preacher. She led a severely ascetic life, clad in the bareness of one who had forsaken comforts, and by example and precept conveyed her teachings to the masses. Like Mira she sang of Siva, the great beloved and thousands of her followers, Hindu as well as Muslim, committed to memory her famous *Vakyas.*

There is a high moral teaching which Lalla demonstrated when during her nude state a gang of youthful rowdies were mocking her. A sober-minded cloth vendor intervened and chastised them. On this she asked the vendor for two pieces of ordinary cloth, equal in weight. She put them on either shoulder and continued her wanderings. On the way some had salutations for her and some had gibes. For every such greeting she had a knot in the cloth, for the salutation in the piece on the right, and for the gibes in the piece on the left. In the evening after her round, she returned the pieces to the vendor and had them weighed. Neither had, of course, gained or lost by the knots. She thus brought home to the vendor, and her disciples, that mental equipoise should not be shaken by the manner people greeted

or treated a person.

So that her teachings and spiritual experiences might reach the masses, she propagated them in their own language. She thus laid the foundations of the rich Kashmiri literature and folklore. More than 30 per cent of the Kashmiri idioms and proverbs derive their origin from her *Vakyas.*

These *Vakyas* or Sayings are an aggregate of yoga philosophy and Saivism, expressive of high thought and spiritual truth, precise, apt and sweet. Her quatrains are now rather difficult to understand as the language has undergone so many changes, and references to special yogic and philosophic terms are numerous therein.

Some of these Sayings have been collected and published by Dr Grierson, Dr Barnett, Sir Richard Temple and Pandit Anand Koul. Apart from the consideration that they explain the Saiva philosophy of Kashmir through the Kashmiri dialect, her Sayings exemplify the synthesis of cultures for which Kashmir has always been noted.

Lalla fills her teachings with many truths that are common to all religious philosophy. There are in it many touches of Vaisnavism, the great rival of Saivism, much that is strongly reminiscent of the doctrines and methods of the Muhammadan Sufis who were in India and Kashmir well before her day, and teachings that might be Christian with Biblical analogies, though Indians' knowledge of Christianity must have been very remote and indirect at her date.

Lalla is no believer in good work in this or in former lives, in pilgrimages or austerities. In one of her Sayings she criticises the cold and meaningless way in which religious rituals are performed:

God does not want meditations and austerities,
Through love alone canst thou reach the Abode of Bliss.
Thou mayst be lost like salt in water,
Still it is difficult for thee to know God.

All labour, to be effective, must be undertaken without thought of profit and dedicated to Him. Exhorting her followers to stick rigidly to ideals of love and service to humanity, paying no thought to the praise or condemnation that might follow from their observance, she says:

Let them jeer or cheer me;
Let anybody say what he likes;
Let good persons worship me with flowers;

What can any one of them gain, I being pure?
If the world talks ill of me,
My heart shall harbour no ill-will;
If I am a true worshipper of God,
Can ashes leave a stain on a mirror?

She is a strong critic of idolatory as a useless and even silly "work" and adjures the worshipper of stocks and stones to turn to yogic doctrines and exercise for salvation:

Idol is of stone, temple is of stone;
Above (temple) and below (idol) are one;
Which of them wilt thou worship, O foolish Pandit?
Cause thou the union of mind with Soul.

She further castigates the fanatical followers of the so-called 'religions' in the following apt saying:

O Mind, why hast thou become intoxicated at another's expense?
Why hast thou mistaken true for untrue?
Thy little understanding hath made thee attached to other's religion;
Subdued to coming and going; to birth and death.

But Lalla is not a bigot; she constantly preaches wide and even eclectic doctrines; witness the following and many other instances: "It matters nothing by what name the Supreme is called, He is still the Supreme;" "Be all things to all men;" "the true saint is the servant of all mankind through his humility and loving kindness." "It matters nothing what a man is or what his work of gaining his livelihood may be, so long as he sees the Supreme properly."

She puts no value on anything done without the saving belief in yogic doctrine and practice, one of the results of which is the destruction of the fruits of all work, good or bad. The aspirant should try to attain perfection in this life. He only requires faith and perseverence:

Siva is with a fine net spread,
He permeath the mortal coils.
If thou, whilst living, canst not see Him, how canst thou when dead.
Take out Self from Self, after pondering over it.

She is a firm believer in herself: says she has become famous and talks of the "wine of her Sayings" as something obviously precious, and alludes often to her own mode of life, fully believing she has obtained Release:

I saw and found I am in everything,
I saw God effulgent in everything.
After hearing and pausing, see Siva,
The House is His alone; who am I, Lalla.

The removal of confusion caused among the masses by the preachings of zealots was the most important object of her mission. Having realised the Absolute Truth, all religions were to her merely paths leading to the same goal:

Shiv chuy thali thali rozan;
Mo zan Hindu ta Musalman.
Truk ay chuk pan panun parzanav,
Soy chay Sahibas sati zaniy zan.
Siva pervades every place and thing;
Do not differentiate between Hindu and Musalman.
If thou art intelligent, recognise thine own self;
That is the true acquaintance with God.

The greatness of Lalla lies in giving the essence of her experiences in the course of her yoga practices through the language of the common man. She has shown very clearly the evolution of the human being, the theory of *nada,* the worries of a *jiva* and the way to keep them off. The different stages of yoga with the awakening of the *kundalini* and the experiences at the six plexus have been elucidated by her.

Much can indeed be said on her work as a poet and more, perhaps, on her work in the spiritual realm. But at a time when the world was suffering from conflict — social, political and economic — her efforts in removing the difference between man and man need to be emphasised. As long back as the 15th century she preached non-violence, simple living and high thinking and became thus Lalla Arifa for Muhammadans and Lalleswari for Hindus.

She was thus the first among the long list of saints who preached medieval mysticism which later embraced the whole of India. It must be remembered that Ramananda's teaching and that of those who came after him could not have affected Lalla, because Ramananda flourished between 1400 and 1470, while Kabir sang his famous *Dohas* between 1440 and 1518, and Guru Nanak between 1469 and 1538. Tulsidas did not come on the scene till 1532 and 1623, whereas Mira flourished much later.

Later Mystics

The traditions set up by Lalla were kept alive by numerous mystic saints, both Hindu and Muslim, in the centuries following her death. In the 17th century, during the reign of Aurangzeb, there flourished two whose memory is still cherished by the general populace and still command reverence from a large number of Kashmiri Brahmins.

The first is the famous hermitess, Rupa Bhawani alias Alakeswari ('the lady of the lock of hair') so called because she used to leave the hair loose and undone, or Alak-Iswari (incarnation of the Invisible). She was born in 1625 AD. Her father, Pandit Madhav Dhar, a saintly person, lived in Srinagar. He used to have philosophical discussions with a Muslim Faqir, Sayyid Kamal alias Thag Baba, who lived just near his house across the river.

Like Lalleswari, Rupa Bhawani also got married at a young age, and like her again she had to give up the world and live an ascetic's life. Her spiritual preceptor was her father who initiated her into the mysteries of yoga. While living as an ascetic at a village near Srinagar, she came in contact with a Muhammadan mystic, Shah Sadiq Qalandar, with whom she used to have long philosophical discussions.

Her Verses and Sayings composed in the Kashmiri language of her times, have a profound mystic significance. They reveal the influence of both Kashmir Saivism and Islamic Sufism: some explaining her spiritual experiences and teachings of yoga. According to her, non-attachment and dissolution of 'self' or ego (*fana* of the Sufis) are the essentials of Realisation:

Selflessness is the sign of the Selfless;
Bow down at the door of the Selfless.
The selfless are of the highest authority —
The kings of the time and the wearers of the crest and crown.

Allowing a glimpse into her own spiritual experiences, she says:

I dashed down into the nether regions (of the body) and brought the vital breath up;
I got its clue out of earth and stones;
Then my *Kundalini* woke up with *nada* (loud noise); I drank wine by the mouth.
I got the vital breath (and) gathered it within myself.

Rupa Bhawani introduced a very important social reform, which is still respected and strictly followed. She tabooed bigamy and poly-

gamy in the family of her father, the Dhars. This reform has greater force and higher sanction than a statutory law, and has now nearly become universal among the Hindus of Kashmir.

Rupa Bhawani passed away at a ripe old age of 96 years in the year 1721 AD. Shah Sadiq Qalandar[22] recorded the year in a Persian chronogram, meaning,

That holy-natured incarnation of the Unseen
Broke her coil of four elements (*i.e.* quitted her body);
Flew to the highest heaven;
With a good-natured heart united with Bliss.

While Aurangzeb was enforcing his puritanism and orthodoxy at his court, Sufism and mysticism were still being preached among the general populace by mystics like Sarmad in Delhi and Rishi Pir in Kashmir. Born in 1637 AD of a family of orthodox Brahmins, Rishi Pir had a religious turn of mind from his very childhood. He found a "spiritual guide" in a famous hermit, Pandit Krishna Kar.

Rishi Pir on account of his saintly nature soon became famous and was revered by all classes of people. He had long sessions of discussions and discourses with Akhund Mullah Shah, the learned tutor of Dara Shikoh who had built his monastery on the southern slope of the Hari Parbat hill.

Rishi Pir was called by his followers *"Padshah har du jehan"* the "Emperor of two worlds". This, together with Rishi Pirs's association with Dara Shikoh's tutor, alarmed Aurangzeb, particularly when he had to face revolts raised by religious leaders in different parts of the country. He, therefore, sent order to his governor, Saif Khan, to put him under arrest.

Whereas the Hindus claim that he appeared in a dream to Aurangzeb the same night demanding the annulment of the imperial

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22. It was he who wrote the following fine lines in Persian, suggestive of the transitoriness of the world:

Yak chand sawarah sair-i-dashte kardem:
Yak chand pyadah pasht pashte kardem.
Didem ki in kucha nadarad payan;
Gashte kardem o baz gashte kardem.
At one time I made excursions over a plain, riding;
At another time I walked round a plateau.
I found this lane (*i.e.* life) had no end:
I strolled on and on and then strolled back.

order, the Muslim version is that some of his ministers assured the emperor that Rishi Pir had no political axe to grind but was simply a holy man to whom worldly power was repugnant. Howsoever it may be, the emperor cancelled his orders and thenceforth Rishi Pir carried on his religious mission peacefully.

Aurangzeb seems to have been struck with remorse at his cruel action in condemning Sarmad, the famous Sufi of his time, to the gallows. When in 1665 he visited Kashmir, Rishi Pir comforted him by his assurance that exalted souls like that of Sarmad did neither care for death, nor bear any sense of grievance against those who harmed them.

Many miracles are attributed to Rishi Pir. But this was sharply criticised by his contemporary, Rupa Bhawani, who viewed them with disfavour as tending to show personal and wordly aggrandizement. Rishi Pir was humbled and desisted thenceforth from indulging in this cheap way of winning popular applause. He died at the age of 60 in the year 1697. His son also turned a recluse and was affectionately known among the people as Rahnawab.

During the Afghan rule too, Kashmir had a number of Muslim and Hindus saints, who with their comforting words and sometimes even by their active intercession with the governors on behalf of the people reduced the pitch of fury of many an unscrupulous ruler. Jiwan Sahib, for instance, cast a spell of devotion on the hard-hearted tyrant, Azad Khan. The latter had superstitious awe of the *faqir,* who many a time admonished him not to indulge in wanton cruelty. Jiwan Sahib lived at Rainawari, the eastern suburb of Srinagar, and led a life of austere meditation and penance. Thousands of people used to flock to him for solace and listen attentively to his discourses, the burden of which was simple living and high thinking.

Influence of Islam on Hinduism and Vice Versa

We have now a fair picture of the deep influence that Islam had on orthodox Hinduism. Long before Kashmir had a Muslim ruler the new religion had penetrated into the Valley, its missionaries having effected the conversion of most of the lower castes. The denunciation of idolatory and caste system by Islam was no doubt a major factor in making an accomplished king like Harsa to spoliate temples and desecrate the images. Hindus, particularly of lower castes, also seem to have discarded many of the rigid rituals and practices preached by

orthodox Brahmins. Bemoans Jonaraja: "As the wind destroys the trees and the locusts the *shali* crop, so did the Yavanas destroy the usages of Kashmira."[23] And again, "the kingdom of Kashmira was polluted by the evil practices of the malechas."[24] Srivara, the historian who followed him, speaks in the same strain. He complains that many of the misfortunes of Kashmir were due to the changes in customs and manners of the people.[25] In course of time, the lower castes gave up the performance of prescribed ceremonies, and accepted Islam.

Even the Brahmins, who retained the Hindu religion and caste, could not escape the influence of the new religion. A majority of them in order to retain the government jobs, took to the study of Persian which in a few centuries became so popular with the Pandit class that they composed hymns and prayers to their deities in the Persian language rather than in Sanskrit. There were changes in dress and manners.

Lalla, for instance, was critical of the caste system and idol worship.

But if Islam was responsible in effecting profound changes in the Hindu rites, rituals, and belief in caste and idol worship, it could not escape a transformation in several of its own beliefs and practices. The new converts could not make a complete break with the past, and continued to follow some of their old rites and rituals. Even though Islam, for instance, denounced the caste system, they carried on with their old caste rites in marriage and other social customs. They also continued to celebrate their festivals of *Gana-chakra. Chaitra, Vyathtruwah, Sri Panchami.* Many of them did not totally give up idol worship and continued to have reverence for their old places of worship and pilgrimage.

This had also a profound effect on the rulers, particularly the Sultans, who in deference to the wishes of the people, adopted some of the practices of their former religion. Most of these Sultans had Hindu wives who, though converted to Islam, could not fail to influence their husbands and children with their former religious beliefs. It is, therefore, no wonder that some Sultans had faith in the efficacy of *havans* or sacrificial ceremonies of the Hindus; in visiting Hindu *tirthas,* and in allowing Brahmin priests to officiate at several functions, for example, the time of coronation, or birth of the heir-apparent.

A unique practice among the Kashmiri Muslims is the singing in

23. *Jonarja*
24. Ibid., p. 59.
25. *Srivara.*, pp. 235, 319

chorus "Darood" or praises of the various aspects of God in Persian after offering *namaz* in the mosque. Singing hymns in chorus is prohibited in mosques, but the converts prevailed upon Shah Hamadan to waive this prohibition in their case as they were used to offer worship in this manner in temples before conversion. The Rishis of Kashmir had been greatly influenced by the Hindu religion. Like the Hindu Rishis or recluses, they believed in withdrawing from the world, practising celebacy, undergoing penances in caves and jungles, refraining from killing birds and animals for food or eating even freshly picked vegetables and fruits. They lived on wild vegetables and endeavoured to follow the yogic practices of the Hindus.

"Popular Islam in Kashmir thus became diluted with foreign elements, and this character it has retained until today."[26]

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26. Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, p. 241.

16

ART AND LETTERS

As in religion and philosophy, so too in art and literature, medieval Kashmir is noteworthy for the emergence of a composite culture, result, no doubts, of the deep Islamic influence from Persia and Central Asia. The large number of Sayyid nobles, theologians, artists and litterateurs who entered Kashmir during the reigns of Sultans Sikandar and Zain-ul-abidin, and were welcomed and patronised by them revolutionised the existing pattern of art and literature. But the ancient culture of Kashmir did not perish before the onslaughts of the new faith and language. There was, no doubt, persecution under the rule of some of the Sultans and Mughal and Afghan governors, but by and large the kings professing Islam were reasonably tolerant and they encouraged the study of Indian literature and science.

Sanskrit

This is particularly true of Sanskrit which "remained for a considerable period after the end of Hindu rule the medium of official communication and record."[1] It is amply shown by the *Lokaprakasa,* a compendium of official documents, reports, etc. This remarkable handbook of Kashmirian administrative routine is drawn up in a curious "Sanskrit jargon full of Persian and Arabic words which must have become current after the introduction of Islam." It clearly shows the transition from Sanskrit to Persian, adopted later as the official language of administration.

The continued popular use of Sanskrit even among Muslims is strikingly proved by the Sanskrit inscriptions on a few tombs in the cemetery of Baha-ud-din Sahib at the foot of the Hari Parbat hill in Srinagar. One of the tombs bears a date corresponding to 1484 AD and

1. Stein, Trans of the *Rajatarangini* Vol.I, p. 130

was put up in the reign of Sultan Muhammad Shah. Stein found Sanskrit inscriptions on a number of old Muslim tombs at Srinagar, near Martand, and elsewhere.[2]

The creative period in Sanskrit literature, however, had long before this come to an end, there being little of intrinsic merit, though we find some significant contributions in historical literature, devotional poetry and Saivism. Whereas previously Kashmir was the 'high school' of Sanskrit learning, it receded into the background during the medieval period. There is no originality: works seem to have been produced only for the learned; and there is no contact with the masses.

We owe the knowledge of the history of the times to four Sanskrit Chroniclers, namely, Jonaraja, Srivara, Prajyabhatta and Suka. Jonaraja (d. 1459) brought Kalhana's narrative of the kings of Kashmir down to the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin. The greater portion of his *Dvitiya-Rajatarangini* deals with the reigns of the later Hindu rulers from Jayasimha to queen Kota. Jonaraja was a scholar of considerable attainments. He is the author of an exhaustive commentary on Mankha's *Srikanthacharita.*

Srivara the author of *Jaina-Rajatarangini* was the pupil of Jonaraja and in four books deals with the period 1459-89 AD. The gradual decline in Sanskrit learning in Kashmir which suffered during "the period of troubles and oppression which lasted with short interruptions of two and a half centuries previous to Akbar's conquest". is reflected in the character and contents of these later Chronicles. Srivara who besides being an eminent musician, was well-versed in Persian and Arabic languages also, wrote *Kathakautuka,* an adaptation in 15 cantos of Jami's *Yusuf-wa-Zuleikha* which is of peculiar interest, in as much as it is probably the earliest instance of the utilisation of Persian literature. Hebrew in origin, the story glorifies Muhammad Shah of Kashmir and is written in easy Sanskrit poetry. "The romantic Persian love-lyric has been amalgamated with the Indian Saiva faith, the last canto being entirely dedicated to the praise of Siva".[3] Srivara, besides writing his historical works also compiled his *Subhasitavali* containing extracts from the works of more than 380 poets, both from Kashmir and the rest of India.

Prajyabhatta's composition, *Rajavali-pataka,* ended with the year 1513-14 AD and the reign of Fateh Shah. The narrative was completed by

2. Ibid.
3. *The Delhi Sultanate,* p. 466.

his pupil Suka, who brought the history of Kashmir down to the annexation of the kingdom by Akbar (1586).

A remarkable contribution to Sanskrit devotional poetry is Jagadhar Bhatt's *Stuti-Kusmanjali* written in 1450. It consists of 38 hymns in praise of Siva.

Among other important works of the period mention must be made of Jagadhar Bhatt's *Balabodini,* a work on the Katantra school of grammar, written in 1475 AD. Varadaraja's *Sivasutra-vartika,* composed in the 15th century, is a commentary on *Siva-Sutra.* Another important author and commentator of books on Kashmir Saivism was Shivopadhyaya who lived in Srinagar in about 1757 AD. Sahib Kaul, a learned scholar of the 17th century, wrote books on tantric worship.

A prolific writer in Sanskrit of the 17th century was Rajanaka Ratnakantha, son of Sankarakantha. He is the author of several commentaries on Kashmirian *Kavyas* and also of some original poetical compositions. His *Laghupacinka* is a commentary on Ratnakara's *Haravijaya-kavya; Sisyahita* on the *Yudhisthiravijayakavya* of Vasudeva; *Laghupanchika* on Jagadhar Bhatt's *Stuti-Kusumanjali.* The *Ratnasataka* is century of verses in praise of Surya and *Suryastutirahasya,* is a small devotional poem. Ratnakantha is also credited with the authorship of *Sarasamuchchaya,* a commentary on the *Kavyaprakasa,* containing a resume of Jayanti and other earlier expositions. Ratnakantha was also a fast copyist and the *Codex Archetypus* of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* is in his hand.

Sanskrit lost its privileged position not because the Persian language received patronage from the Muslim rulers, but because it had ceased to be the language of the common man who had taken to a vernacular evolved through several centuries. The medieval period in Kashmir thus presents a composite picture of the development of the Kashmirian language among the common people and cultivation of Persian by the learned. Before we take up the consideration of the progress of the new vernacular, it will be profitable to have a bird's-eye view of the proficiency that the Kashmiri scholars and poets attained in Persian which replaced Sanskrit as the language of the court and medium of government communication and record.

Persian

Persian language was not new to Kashmiri scholars of the later

Hindu period. With the establishment of Muslim rule in north-west India towards the middle of the 11th century, Persian words entered into Sanskrit vocabulary as the official designations like *dibir* or *divira* (after the persian *dabir*) and *ganjavara* (after the Persian *ganjwar*) would show. Besides, Kashmir seems to have had cultural relations with Persia from ancient times. The terracotta tiles unearthed at Harwan which date back to the fourth century AD depict Sassanian characteristics. These influences did not, however, dominate till the introduction of Islam during the middle of the 14th century. The pace of Perso-Islamic influence in the Valley was accelerated with the immigration of Sayyid nobles and scholars from Persia and Central Asia. Persian began to be studied in right earnest by the Kashmiri rulers and nobles and presided over by eminent scholars from Persia. Often ardent scholars went to the universities at Bukhara, Samarkand, Herat and Merv, to drink deep from the fountains of Persian and Islamic culture.

With the increasing patronage extended to Persian scholarship by the Sultans, Sanskrit receded to the background and Kashmiri students switched over to the study of Persian, which became the language of educated classes and even found its way into the villages. The process was completed with the replacement of Sanskrit by Persian as the court language of Kashmir during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin. Thenceforth, Kashmir produced poets and writers in Persian whose beauty of style and depth of thought equalled that of the litterateurs of Persia. If that country is proud of its Firdausi, Hafiz, Rumi and Nizami, Kashmir is equally proud of its Sarfi, Ghani, Dairi and Hubbi. Hafiz was not indulging in poetic imagination when he sang;

The black-eyed beauties of Kashmir and the Turks of Samarqand,
Sing and dance to the strains of Hafiz of Shiraz's verse.

The Sultan who was himself a poet and the author of two prose works in Persian, made a great contribution to the spread of Persian in Kashmir. Not only did he appreciate and reward original works, but he set up a translation bureau to render some of the famous Sanskrit works into Persian. Most of the literature in Persian produced during the reign of Zain-ul-abidin has perished, but from the small fragments which are still available, it can be deduced that Persian had attained a high standard of development in his time.

It was during this reign that the Brahmins of Kashmir, the traditional community of Sanskrit scholarship, took a far-reaching decision of learning Persian under the compelling circumstances of earning their

living and maintaining their privileged position as government officials. There was naturally resistance to this move from the more conservative members of the community who stuck fast to the study of Sanskrit and observance of traditional customs and ceremonies. This class came to be known as Bhashyabhatts whereas the more liberal class who took to the study of Persian were known as karkuns.

We thus find both Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir making a sizeable contribution to Persian literature. Under Zain-ul-abidin's patronage, Mulla Ahmed completed a Persian translation of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, known as *Bahr-ul-Asmar*. Though this translation is not extant now, it is presumed to have been the original sourcebook for later histories of Kashmir written in Persian. Srivara was, as noted above, a Sanskrit and Persian scholar and adopted the style and metre of Jami's *Yusuf-wa-Zuleikha* in writing his *Kathakautuka*. Yodhabhatta, another courtier, had mastered the whole of *Shah-nama* which he recited to the delight of the Sultan.

We find a similar patronage being extended to Persian under the successors of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin. Hassan Shah, though not a poet himself, was a man of culture and patronised poets and learned men. His mother, Gul Khatun, built a college and founded a school for the study of medicine. Similarly, Hussain Shah Chak sought the company of the learned. Himself a poet, he encouraged the study of Persian and patronised poets and litterateurs. Yusuf Shah Chak was perhaps the most learned of the Chak rulers and fond of music and dancing. Muhammad Amin Mustaghni, a Kashmiri poet, was one of his courtiers.

But the two outstanding poets and scholars of the later Chak rule were Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi and Baba Daud Khaki.

Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi

Scholar, mystic, statesman and traveller, Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi made an appreciable contribution to the Arabic and Persian literatures. His poetical diction, especially the *mathnawi* and *ghazal*, ranks him with Nizami and Jami. He was widely respected by top-ranking Indian statesmen and men of letters of his time, and wielded enormous influence on the people of Kashmir on account of his eminent scholarship and political foresight.

According to Mulla Abdul Wahab Nuri, the author of *Fathat-i-Kubrawiyah*, an invaluable treatise on Sufism, the Sheikh was born in 1521. He claimed descent from the second Caliph of Islam (Omar)

and called himself 'Asimi' after one of the sons of the Caliph.

Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi received his education partly from his father, Sheikh Hassan Ganai, and partly from Mulla Muhammad Aani, Mulla Razi and Hafiz Bashir of Khandabhawan in Srinagar. Aani was the direct disciple of the celebrated poet-philosopher, Nur-ud-din Abdur Rehman Jami (15th century), from whom he had received his education in his early youth at the city of Herat (Afghanistan). The Sheikh was quick in grasping the intricate and difficult rules of Arabic grammar and won the surname of 'Sarfi' (the grammarian) from his tutor.

After the completion of his education, which meant in those days the study of Arabic Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Philosophy, History, Arabic and Persian Literature, Islamic Jurisprudence, Tradition and the Quranic Commentary, the Sheikh was anxious to adopt a spiritual guide for himself. He was told that Sheikh Hussain of Khwarazm (Khiva, in Russian Turkestan) would be the most suitable guide for him. He, therefore, set out for Khwarazm, and on his way, came into contact with famous saints and learned men of his time. After his return from Khwarazm he was held by all to be an accomplished scholar.

Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi travelled extensively. He visited various cities in India. His admiration for Hindustan and her cities may be gauged from the fact that there is a lyric in his Persian *Dewan* devoted wholly to the praise and virtues of Ahmedabad and its people.

He came in close contact with literary figures in India and developed a great intimacy with Faizi, the elder brother of Abul Fazal, the celebrated statesman and prime minister of Akbar. He was also on good terms with Mulla Abdul Qadir of Badayun, the celebrated author of the *Muntakhab-ul-Tawârikh.* There is a letter in the *Muntakhab-ul-Tawarikh* addressed to the Sheikh, wherein the Mulla hails him as a great scholar and praises his talents as well as his piety. It is claimed by Maulvi Mohammad Hussain Azad *(Durbar-i-Akbari,* P.71) that he supported the idea of making obeisance to the emperor. While Sarfi was in India, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (the well-known Mujjadid Alf-i-Sani) used to receive instruction from him in Hadis and Sufism.

About this time nearly the whole of Hindustan was coming under the hegemony of the Mughal Empire. Indian art and literature were finding new channels of expression under the tolerant administration of Akbar. Sheikh Sarfi, who during his extensive travels in India and abroad had witnessed this cultural renaissance, became convinced that the time had come for Kashmir to give up its temporary isolation and

regain in close association with India her former position as a leading centre of Indian learning and art.

His convictions were further strengthened by the unfortunate political and religious dissensions prevailing among the various communities in Kashmir, with consequent evil effects on the economic condition of the common man. The Sheikh was roused to indignation, and headed a deputation of leading men of Kashmir to the court of Akbar, urging him to annex the Kingdom.

According to Khwaja Mohammad Azam Didamari, Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi died in 1003 AH (1594 AD). He was mourned by the great personalities of his time and was buried near Zaina Kadal in Srinagar.

Sheikh Yaqub besides being a poet is the author of several books, dealing with Sufism, travel, Islamic Traditions and Quranic Commentary.

His versified treatise on Sufis, *Maslak-ul-Akhyar,* comparable to Nizami's *Makhzan-i-Asrar,* contains 4,050 couplets. According to the Sheikh's own statement, the book was written in 1589. It is still in Manuscript form. An anonymous and undated copy is preserved in the Research and Publications Department of Kashmir.

Wamiq-u-Azra, a Persian Mathnawi in imitation of Nizami's *Shirin Khusro,* deals with the romance and love of Wamiq and Azra, the two traditional lovers of Arabia. As the chronogram given at the end indicates, it was written in AH 993 (1585). A manuscript copy is preserved in the Research and Publications Department of Kashmir. *Maghariz-ul-Nabi,* in imitation of Nizami's *Sikandar-namah* deals with the life and battles of the Prophet. The author in the beginning devotes 200 couplets to his own statement. The book was written in AH 1000 (1591).

A Mathnawi in simple Persian, *Laila Majnoon,* is in imitation of Nizami and Jami's famous work of that name. According to the author's own statement, the date of its composition was 998 AH (1589).

The last of his 'Five Treasures' *Muqamat-i-Murshad,* was written by the Sheikh on the life and miracles of his Pir (spiritual guide) Sheikh Hussain of Khwarazm. It consists of 3,000 couplets. At the end there is some advice to his brother, Mir Mohammad 'Asimi'. in which he lays down the principles of a good and successful life. The book, according to the Sheikh's own assertion, was composed in 1000 AH (1591).

Another Mathnawi, *Dhikriyya,* deals with Tassawuf (Sufism) and is not included in the 'five Treasures.'

Sharh Thulathoyyat, a book on Tradition is a commentary on Imam Bukhari's book of that name. Another work on Islamic Tradition known as *Sharh Saheeh Bukhari,* is an annotation of the famous book *Saheeh Bukhari.*

Manasik-ul-Haj written by the Sheikh after he had performed the Hadj pilgrimage deals with the rules and regulations of the holy pilgrimage.

Tafseer-i-Matlab-ul-Talibeen is a Quranic Commentary. It was seen and praised by the Sheikh's contemporary and friend, Mulla Abdul Qadir of Badayun. It was the last work undertaken by the Sheikh, and he died before its completion. A rough copy is in the Research and Publications Department, Kashmir.

A collection of Sarfi's Persian lyrics, Rubais and Qasidas known as *Dewan-i-Sarfi* in three manuscript volumes is preserved in the Research and Publications Department of Kashmir.

A short treatise on Sufism, *Rawaih,* was composed in AH 976 (1568).

His other works include *Sharh Aarbi'in, Sharh Rubiyyat, Hashia-Tauzeeh, Rasail-i-Mu'imma and Taqrizat.*

Baba Daud Khaki

A scion of the famous Ganai family of literary traditions, Baba Daud was born in 1521 AD. His father, Sheikh Hassan Ganai, was a noted scribe. Baba Daud studied under Mulla Bashir and Allama Razi-ud-din. After completing his education, he served as a tutor of Nazuk Shah's son. But he soon gave up his service and became a disciple of Sheikh Hamza Makhdum. Being a learned Sufi and an accomplished poet, he was held in great respect by the people, and when Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi led a deputation to the court of Akbar to invite the emperor to annex Kashmir, Baba Daud Khaki was also one of its members. On his return from Akbar's court, he died at Anantnag in the year 1585.

Baba Daud Khaki wrote a number of books in Persian, notable among which are *Vird-ul-Muridin, Qasida-i-Jalaliyya, Qasida-i-Ghusliyya, Dastur-us-Salikin,* and *Majma-ul- Fawa'id.* His poetry is permeated with religious and mystical ideas and reflects the veneration in

which he held his spiritual preceptor, Sheikh Hamza Makhdum.

Persian under the Mughals

With the advent of the Mughal rule, Persian scholarship attained new heights in Kashmir. Not only were extensive works written on subjects like medicine, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy and religion but there appeared gems in poetry, literature, history, biography and travel. Persian language suited the temperament and taste of the Kashmirian scholar. The love and appreciation of beauty reflected in his works, represented the enchanting surroundings he lived in — the calm lakes, the snowcapped mountains, the lush green meadows, bubbling fountains, the multicoloured flowers, the changing seasons with their varied hues. The peaceful rule of the Mughals and the generous patronage that the emperors and their governors bestowed on learning and literature, resulted in a full bloom of Persian scholarship in Kashmir and its sons and daughters carried to, and propagated the language in not only the narrow confines of the Valley but all over India. No wonder Kashmir acquired the epithet of *Iran-i-Saghir* or the "Little Iran."

Akbar and his learned courtier, Faizi, had even before the annexation of Kashmir, formed a high opinion of Persian scholars of Kashmir, the life and works of Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi and Baba Daud Khaki countributing mainly to this estimation. And when Faizi came to Kashmir in the train of his patron and master, Akbar, he decided to stay on to enjoy the company of Kashmiri poets and scholars of Persian language. So did Urfi, another great poet. Shah Jehan's court poet Kalim, was also attracted by the charm of Kashmir's beauty and the learning of her sons and daughters and stayed on in the Valley for years to complete his *Badshah-nama*. He was a constant companion of Kashmir's greatest Persian poet, Ghani, which accounts for the marked resemblance in their style and diction. while returning from the Mughal court to his home in Isfahan in Iran, the great poet, Saib, stayed in Kashmir for a considerable time enjoying the company of Ghani.

Kashmir excelled particularly in the production of historical literature in Persian. Akbar had the *Rajatarangini* translated into Persian by Mulla Ahmad Shahabadi. During Jehangir's time Malik Haider Chaudura and Narayan Kaul Ajiz wrote detailed history of Kashmir in Persian. Later Khwaja Muhammad Didamari and Birbal Kachru followed the tradition of writing the history of the Valley.

Mulla Muhsin Fani

But an outstanding contribution by Kashmir to Persian literature particularly to a study of comparative religion and philosophy was made by Mulla Muhsin Fani, the celebrated author of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*. Born in about 1615 this philosopher-poet belonged to a family which enjoyed a reputation for culture and learning.

Mulla Muhsin had his early education under his father, Sheikh Hasan. He, however, left Kashmir at a young age to study further at centres of Islamic culture and learning in Iran and India. He first took service under the ruler of Balkh, Nazar Muhammad Khan. After staying there for some time, he returned to India where his attainments in art and philosophy attracted the notice of Dara Shikoh. He was soon elevated to the position of the judge at Allahabad. Here he came in contact with a great Sufi of his time, Sheikh Habibullah.

Meanwhile the political rivalries and jealousies rampant at the Mughal court were responsible for his undoing. Prince Murad who conquered Balkh, found among the official papers several panegyrics written by Fani in honour of the ex-ruler, Nazar Muhammad Khan, and also some correspondence in his hand. This evoked Shah Jehan's displeasure against the poet and he was deprived of his office and other privileges. Mulla Muhsin then retired to Kashmir where he set up a school and preached his own religious beliefs. He was highly respected for his erudition and eloquence and his house was frequented by the most distinguished men of Kashmir, including the governor of the province. Several scholars of note among whom were Mulla Tahir Ghani, the latter's brother, Mulla Zaman Nafi and Haji Aslam Salim, issued from his school.

But Fani's urge for travel took him again to Khorasan and after his return to his birthplace he took to a life of seclusion in a monastery built by Dara Shikoh on the river-bank at Qutbdinpura (present Gurgari Mohala). Here in 1645 AD he wrote his *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* or the "School of Sects", a famous work on the religious and philosophical creeds of Asia. His liberal views on religion and admiration for the tenets of some other than Islam raised a storm of protest from the orthodox divines who condemned him as a *murtad* or apostate. The book has been of considerable interest to eminent scholars and students of philosophy in recent years and has been translated into many languages including French and English.

The *Dabistan* gives not only important information concerning

the chief religions of the world in clear and explicit terms, but it agrees on the most material points with those of other accredited authors. "Fani enlivens his text by citing interesting quotations from the works of famous poets and philosophers, and by frequent references to books which deserve to be known. The whole work is interspersed with anecdotes and sayings characteristic of individuals and sects which existed in his times. To what he relates from other sources, he frequently adds reflections of his own, which evince a sagacious and enlightened mind. Thus he exhibits in himself an interesting example of Eastern erudition and philosophy. The *Dabistan* comprises, in its allusions, references practically to the whole history of Asia"[4]

Besides being an erudite writer in prose, Mulla Muhsin Fani was an accomplished poet. Among his collection of poems there is a moral essay entitled *Masdur-ul-Asar* or the 'Source of Signs'. His poems written in simple Persian are full of beautiful imagery, apt similes and metaphors:

Only the image of your eyes drunk with passion exists in my heart.
None can keep a richer wine in his flask, than this of mine.

Muhsin Fani died in 1671 AD and lies buried at Gurgari Mohala behind the Khanaqah of Dara Shikoh.

Fani, thy heavenward march is but gyration,
Like what the compass on paper draws;
For one foot moves, the other keeps its station.

Travelogue and Biography

Mulla Muhammad Ali Kashmiri who went to Ahmadnagar in his youth and took service on the staff of the king, Sultan Burhan-al-Mulk, was a prolific writer in Persian prose. He was also an Arabic scholar and when Khan-i-Khanan conquered Ahmadnagar, Mulla Muhammad was taken on the latter's staff, and given the assignment of translating a famous work of Khwaja Sain-ud-din from Arabic to Persian. Mulla Muhammad Ali died at Malkapur in Berar and is burried there.

Another eminent Persian poet at the court of Jehangir was Mulla Muhammad Yusuf Kashmiri. His brother, Mulla Muhammad Sadiq, is the author of *Tabaqat-i-Shahjehani* which contains an account of the lives of eminent personalities who flourished under Timur and his successors down to the reign of Shah Jehan. Born in 1591 AD, Sadiq spent

4. Shea and Troyer, Intro to Translation of *Dabistan*, clxxix-cxcv.

the major part of his life at Delhi. He studied under Sheikh Abdul Haq Dehlvi. From a reference in this book itself, it is presumed that he wrote the *Tabaqat-i-Shahjehani* in the year 1636. A manuscript copy is in the British Museum.

We are indebted to Khwaja Abdul Karim, a widely travelled Kashmiri, who lived during the rule of the later Mughals, for a fascinating travelogue containing an account of his experiences and observations during his extensive tours abroad.

The Khwaja earned distinction as a writer in Persian while still young. Being of an adventurous nature, he left Kashmir on a pilgrimage to Mecca. But while in Delhi he was held up due to Nadir Shah's invasion and the sack of the city. He approached Nadir who held the land route to Arabia, for a permit to travel to Mecca. Nadir Shah was struck by his boldness and intelligence and offered him service under him. He quickly won the confidence of Nadir Shah and became his foreign minister and on one occasion was deputed as Nadir's envoy to Balaclava and later to the Sultan of Turkey.[5] He was on his retirement allowed to proceed to Mecca.

During his journey to Baghdad, Damascus, Allepo, etc, Khwaja Abdul Karim came in contact with several learned men and political leaders, and when he returned to India, he studied the social and political conditions of Indians and Europeans who had then settled in Bengal and on the Coromandal coast.

All this varied experience fitted the Khwaja who was gifted with a keen power of observation and a facile pen, to give an enlightening and graphic account of contemporary events in India. His fascinating *Memoirs* known also as *Nadir-nama* or *Tarikhi-Nadiri,* is written in an effective and interesting style and contains useful information on contemporary history of Iran and of India from 1739 to 1749 AD.

Of considerable historical and literary interest are several biographies written in Persian during the medieval times. Khwaja Miram Bazaz (1575 AD) in his *Tazkara-i-Murshidin* gives short life-sketches of some noted saints, and Mulla Zihni (1655 AD) gives similarly in his *Tazkara-i-shor'a-i-Kashmir* biographies of, and selected verses from, noted Kashmiri poets. Baba Daud Mushakani wrote in 1653 a valuable book, *Asrar-ul-Abrar,* on similar lines.

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5. Sufi, *Kashir*, p. 380.

Persian Poets

During the first phase of Persian scholarship under the rule of the Sultans, the themes and the style of presentation and the language and metre used were in direct imitation of Iranian scholars who had come to Kashmir or whose works were introduced in the Valley by them. But the Mughal and Afghan period saw the flowering of the Kashmiri's talent in Persian literature. Because of the close association with the rest of India and the frequent travels of Kashmir's learned men to the famous centres of learning in the plains, and the presence in Kashmir of writers and poets from Delhi, Agra, Kandahar and Kabul, new standards were created and we find the emergence of an Indo-Kashmir literature in Persian. This is very much in evidence in the compositions of poets like Hubbi, Auji, Ghani, Fitrati, Brahman, Bulbul, Niku, and others.

Born in the Naushahar quarter of Srinagar in the year 1555 AD, Khwaja Habibullah Hubbi, belonged to the famous Ganai family. His father was a leading salt merchant of his time and he entrusted the education of his son to Mulla Afaqi, and later to Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi. Hubbi, besides being a poet, was passionately devoted to music. He was the author or *Tanbih-ul-Qulub* and *Rahat-ul-Qulub,* treatises on mysticism. He is also the biographer of his teacher, Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi. Hubbi was a devoted Sufi and used often to be deeply engaged in the 'music of the mystics'. Considered as a great saint he received homage from both the king and the commoner. Hubbi's poems, short and sweet are written in a simple style. They are full of ideas and show the "originality and freshness of his imaginative mind."[6]

Persian poetry is replete with references to 'wine' and 'wine-houses' and one of the Kashmiri poets in Persian language who has given an entirely new interpretation to the ideas and imagery roused by these associations, was Auji who lived during the governorship of Mirza Yusuf Khan (1587-1590 AD) and was patronised by the latter. Auji is credited with writing 3,000 couplets which comprised his *Saqi-nama.*

Mulla Tahir Ghani

But the greatest name associated with Persian poetry in Kashmir is that of Mulla Tahir Ghani, whose sonorous couplets speak volumes for their author's inborn poetic imagination and facile expression. Ghani won fame in his lifetime not only in India but in Iran, the home of

6 Sufi. op.cit. Vol.II, p. 474.

Persian. Famous poets and litterateurs of his time were attracted by his poetical compositions and travelled all the way from distant lands to meet him and to enjoy his company.

Not much is, however, known about his life; even his date and year of birth have not been established so far. It is surmised that he was born sometime during the early part of Shah Jehan's reign and lived throughout his life in a small house in Qutbdinpura quarter of Srinagar. Belonging to the family of Ashais, he was a close relation of Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi and a pupil of Mulla Muhsin Fani. Though he lived a life of penury, he never sought the company of the rich or of those wielding political power. He did not hanker after publicity and cheap fame.

> The man made perfect seeks no glory and no singer;
> It is the new (small) moon, not the full, which needs be pointed out with a finger.

It is said of Ghani that he would bolt and lock the outer door of his house when he was in, and leave it open when he went out. On being asked the reason for this curious habit, he is said to have replied that the only article worth anything was *himself* and therefore he locked the door when he was in; and since there was nothing else of value to steal in the house, he left the door unlocked and open when he went out. In one of his couplets he compares his condition to a poor labourer who, lamenting his lot, exclaims:

> The fruit of my labour is presented to someone else,
> And (I am like) a mill which grinds corn for the bread of others.

Ghani is said to have composed about a lakh of verses, but most of them are now lost. A collection of his 2,000 verses was printed in 1845, though some earlier anthologies of Persian poems mention that Ghani had left about 20,000 verses.

The fame of Ghani as a great poet of his day reached the Imperial Court and Aurangzeb is said to have written to the governor, Saif Khan, to send him to Delhi. When the governor approached Ghani with the emperor's invitation, the poet asked him to report to the latter that Ghani was insane and, therefore, unfit to attend the Imperial Court. This was objected to by Saif Khan, whereupon Ghani flew at him, tore his collar and moved off, three days later Ghani passed away and was buried near his house at Qutbdinpura (1668 AD)[7] His life is a perfect.

7. The Bankipore *Catalogue*, Vol.III, p. 137,

illustration of his famous couplet:

> Not for itself the musk-deer bears its musk;
> Not for himself the Poet for his harvest cares.

Ghani was too independent a man to have followed slavishly the style and metre of earlier poets of Iran and Kashmir. Nearly every couplet of his carries a tinge of his birthplace and its beauty. We even find the use of a Kashmiri word here and there as for instance *Kralapan* or potter's thread in the following;

> "Your waist, as slender as potter's thread, serves to cut off heads from the bodies of your lovers, just as a potter sets free with his thread the earthen-ware from the revolving wheel."

Contribution of Hindus to Persian

With the elevation of Persian to the status of court language during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin, the Brahmins faced a crisis in the pursuit of their traditional profession of government service. Shrewd as they have been, they took a wise decision and applied themselves to acquiring proficiency in the new language. No doubt, there is evidence to show, even long before the time of the Sultan, the Hindus of Kashmir had taken to the study of Persian. *Tarikh-i-Baihaqi* (Vol.II,p.503), for instance, mentions Tilak, the son of a barber, "having studied in Kashmir, and coming to Qazi Hassan of Shiraz and knowing eloquent Persian." Tilak flourished at Mahmud's court as an interpreter in Persian and Hindi. The description of the Valley by Alberuni in his *Kitab-ul-Hind* presupposes his contacts with some Kashmiri Brahmins who must have crossed over to north-west India and taken service under Mahmud Ghazni. Besides being Sanskrit scholars they must have been proficient in Persian too to have been able to convey information to the author so accurately and in detail. The fact that Srivara, Sultan Zain-ul-abidin's court-poet and Chronicler, knew both Persian and Arabic besides Sanskrit, shows that the Kashmiri Brahmins must have begun to study Persian quite sometime before its adoption as the language of the court and medium of official correspondence.

But it was only during and after Zain-ul-abidin's reign that the Brahmins adopted Persian as their language of polite literature in general and soon their scholarship in this language reached new heights. Besides translating some of their religious books from Sanskrit to Persian, they wrote exquisite poetry and became master-writers of Persian prose. Even women studied Persian as is evidenced by a letter

written to her brother in Persian verse by Rupa Bhawani. Kashmiri Brahmins who went in search of service, or were driven out following the persecution of Sikandar, to various cities in the rest of India, also acquired proficiency in Persian. One of the earliest scholars to have secured patronage at the court of Shah Jehan was Chandra Bhan Brahman. He became the favourite of both Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb. His ancestors who had left the Valley during Sikandar's reign had settled at Lahore. Chandra Bhan was a pupil of Allama Abdul Hakim of Sialkot. While in Shah Jehan's service, Chandra Bhan attended on the emperor during his travels and recorded daily occurrences. He was later honoured with the title of Rai Chandra Bhan. His pen-name was 'Brahman' and he was considered to be a master of Persian language and literature and his poetical compositions and collection of *Letters* remained for long as models of chaste and simple Persian to be profitably copied by students of this language.

So also Lachiram Saroor, another Kashmiri Brahmin, rose very high at the court of the Nawab of Oudh through his merit as a Persian writer and poet. Rai Rayan Anand Ram Karihalu who was a favourite of Shah Alam II was a great Persian and Arabic scholar as well as an accomplished poet.

In Kashmir proper, the name of Munshi Bhawanidas Kachru stands Pre-eminent among Persian writers and poets. The original style of his *Bahr-i-Tavil* is held in high esteem. Pandit Taba Ram Turki (1776-1847 AD), Satram Baqaya, Daya Ram Kachru, Aftab Bhan, Gobind Kaul, Kailash Dhar, and many other prose writers and poets flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries. Pandit Daya Ram Kachru wrote fascinating Persian poetry, describing the beautiful landscape in Kashmir. He entered the service of Wazir Wafadar Khan Sadozai and while in Kabul gave vent in plaintive and nostalgic numbers to his longing for his beloved homeland:

Mara hub-i-watan ashafta tar kard
Name danam chira qismat badar kard
Zi joshe-i-girya chashmam Achhaval shud
Bihat shud Mar shud talab-i-Dal shud.
The love for my homeland has turned me insane:
How is it that fate should have driven me out of the land?
With the intensity of grief [at separation from my beloved land] my eyes have become [the spring of] Achhaval,
Or maybe the [river] Vitasta, or the Mar [canal], or even the Dal lake.

"The Kashmiri Brahmin", says Sufi, "distinguished himself in Sanskrit and won the proud title of Pandit in the early history of India and he made a name in Persian in Medieval India. He is not behind others in English. He has thus won laurels in all the allied Aryan languages of the world and at different times in the cultural development of India."[8]

Kashmiri

But though Sanskrit and Persian were the medium of polite literature, they became the domain of the learned few. The masses, on the other hand, spoke Prakrit which, with the admixture of words and phrases from the many of languages spoken on the borders of the Valley, assumed the form of a new vernacular — Kashmiri. Whereas during its early phase, the language was preponderatingly composed of Sanskrit words and idioms, its character changed considerably with the advent of Muslim rule in the 14th century, when Persian and Arabic words and expressions entered into its expanding vocabulary, shaping it to the form as it is spoken these days. No wonder it was during the early Sultan period that Kashmiri language attained a distinct status, and that its earliest-known literature is datable to only the 15th century AD.

Origin

Several theories have been put forth regarding the origin of the Kashmiri language. It is traditionally believed by the Kashmiri Pandits — and scholars like Jules Block, George Morgenhstierne, Ralph and L. Turner agree with them — that Kashmiri is an offshoot of the Indo-Aryan or Sanskrit language.

"The complex question of the exact affiliation of Kashmiri", asserts Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterji, "remains still an open one. The fact remains that ever since its earliest history, unlike its western neighbours like Shina and the Kafir dialects, Kashmiri has always remained under the tutelage of Sanskrit."[9]

To boost his favourite theory of the entry of Aryans into the Valley through the country of Dards, Dr Grierson propounded another fantastic theory, namely, that the base of the Kashmiri language was Dardic. Dr Ganju of the Kashmir university with his deep study of Sanskrit, Dardic and Kashmiri languages has completely dismantled Dr

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8. *Kashir,* Vol.II, p. 487
9. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *Kashmir,* Vol.iv, p. 75.

Grierson's fanciful theory.

Actually the facts about the origin of the Kashmiris had not till then surfaced. It was the sustained researches of the present writer which showed that the Kashmiris were originally settled on the banks of the mighty Vedic river Saraswati and when the river after changing its course finally dried up, a batch of these Aryans was given permission by the Naga Chief to settle in the Valley. Their mother tongue was Sanskrit which in the course of time changed into Prakrit and later with the absorption of words from Persian, Arabic and the dialects spoken on the Valley's fringes, became Kashmiri.

The earliest specimen of Kashmiri is the well-known verse in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* where the author, to characterise the boorishness of the Domba relative of king Chakravarman, quotes the vernacular words spoken by him. Ranga, whose daughters, the dancers Hamsa and Nagalata, were taken by the king as his wives, was granted the village Helu in Jagir by the latter. But the document relating to the grant was not registered by the official recorder. Angrily Ranga shouts at him, "You son of a slave, why do you not write: *Rangas Helu dinna* (Helu is to be granted to Ranga)"? In modern Kashmiri this would be *Rangas Hela dyunn.* Here the grammatical elements are traceable through Prakrit to old Indo-Aryan (spoken form of Vedic Sanskrit).

That Kashmiri had become the popular language of the land long before the time of Kalhana (12th century AD) is shown by the use in the *Rajatarangini* of numerous Sanskritised versions of Kashmiri proverbs extant even today. For instance, in v-401 and viii-565, we have a reference to the well-known proverb: *nov shin chhu galan pranis shinas,* the new snow melts the old one. Similarly in vii-1226, there is a marked resemblance to the Kashmiri idiom: *myac ti thavanas na,* "he destroyed him and his house till the very earth."[10]

But it is a hundred years after Kalhana that the earliest known work in the old Kashmiri, *Mahanay Prakash,* was written by Siti Kantha. The theme of the book is Tantric worship and as its name suggests, it aims at finding the highest meaning of Truth through tantric rituals. A close study of its passages which are rather difficult to understand now shows the use of a large number of Sanskrit words.

Though for over a hundred years after *Mahanay Prakash* we do not come across any work in Kashmiri, it seems that the language had made further headway: For, in the 14th century when Lalleswari appeared on

10. For other passages of similar nature *see* vii-1115, viii-148, viii-2546.

the scene, she realised that the times demanded the propagation of her doctrine in the language of the masses. She poured forth her heart, rich in spiritual and mystic experience, in Kashmiri verse. Her language is easier to follow and in some cases comes very near to that spoken now. Her Sayings which became popular were learnt by heart by her followers and in this way were passed down from generation to generation. A collection of these was put in writing by Bhaskara Rajanaka towards the end of the 17th century AD.

Lalleswari in her *Vakyas* begins with a narration of her own spiritual experiences. She tells us that she wandered far and wide in search of Truth, made pilgrimages to holy places and sought salvation through observance of rituals, but all in vain. Then suddenly she found the 'Truthful One' in her own home:

Lalla bo drayas lolare
Chhandan loosum dyan kyaho rat,
Vuchhum Pandit tah pananih gare,
Suy me rutmas nisthur tah sat.
Passionate with longing in my eyes
Searching wide, and seeking day and night
Lo ! I beheld the Truthful One, the Wise,
Here in my own house, filling my gaze.
That was the day of my auspicious star.
Breathless I held Him my guide to be.

But to reach this stage she had to work hard and undergo the exacting discipline of yoga:

Damadam karum daman hale
Prazalyom deep tai naneyam zat
Gnanaki ambar pairim tane
Yim pad Lalli vani tim hrydi ankh.
So my lamp of knowledge blazed a far
My bright soul stood revealed to me.
I then flung my inner light far and wide
And, with darkness all around me sealed,
Did I garner truth and hold Him tight.

Meanwhile Sanskrit had been supplanted by Persian as court language and a number of Sayyids who were scared away by Timur from Persia and Central Asia came and settled down in Kashmir. Their contacts with indigenous saints and savants gave rise to an eclectic school of Rishis who also poured forth their preachings and teachings in

vernacular. The founder of the Order, Sheikh Nur-ud-din, born in about 1377 AD conveyed his mystical experiences and teachings in hundreds of couplets known as *shrukh* (Sans. *sutra*) which became current coins of quotation among the Kashmiris who learnt them by heart. His ideas and experiences can be gathered from the following verses given in translation:

> The lover is he who burns with love,
> Whose self shines like gold.
> When man's heart flares up with the blaze of love,
> Then shall he reach the Infinite.
> Shield not thyself against His arrows,
> Turn not the face from His sword.
> Consider misfortune as sweet as sugar.
> Therein lies thy salvation
> In this world and the next.

In the collection of his Sayings known as *Nur-nama* and *Rishi-nama* we find a marked influence of Persian and Arabic words the number of which increases in the later works.

Again there is a long gap of over a hundred years of which no literature in Kashmiri is now extant. A mythological poem *Banasur-vadha* composed in the 15th century is perhaps the oldest narrative poem in Kashmiri so far known.

Khwaja Habibullah Naushahri who was a profound scholar in Persian also composed mystic poems in Kashmiri. Born in the middle of the 16th century he is the connecting link between the mystic poetry of earlier period and the *'lol'* or love lyrics which were a feature of Kashmiri poetry in succeeding centuries. Complains he:

> From far off he shot at me arrows of fascination,
> Then ran away having injured my heart.
> O, the charm of his casting a look back !
> He saw me and yet pretended not to know !

Habba Khatun and Arnimal

This new movement — the *'lol'* or love-lyric was typified by a short poem, generally the expression of a single mood having human love as its sole expression. It is very musical, brief, abounding in rhymes and assonances, a cry from the lover's heart. And as the earliest foundation of Kashmiri poetry was laid by a mystic hermitess, Lalleswari, the new movement was brought in by another woman, the inimitable Habba

Khatun, the poetess-queen of Kashmir.

Born in the picturesque little village of Candahar, just off the Srinagar-Jammu road, in countryside famous for saffron fields, Habba Khatun, was eminently fitted to voice the hopes and fears of a country-girl brought up in the charming surroundings of the broad-leafed chenars, the tall, slender poplars, rushing torrents, calm lakes and majestic mountains. She received what little education was then available to a countrylass: reading the Quran and reciting its verses in the mornings and evenings. She was married early to a peasant boy, but she could not be happy with an illiterate husband. Out of the constant conflict of her early married life was born that nostalgic and melancholy strain in her songs that came to be the characteristic of her poetry. She gave vent to her unhappiness in her own compositions singing them loudly in her melodious voice.

And one day she attracted the notice of the prince Yusuf Shah Chak who listened to her sonorous voice and captivating songs while out hunting in the countryside. Both fell deeply in love with one another. The prince quickly had her divorced from her husband, and took her as his wife, changing her name from Zoon to that of Habba Khatun by which name she is known to the world today.

She wielded an enormous influence on Yusuf Shah who soon ascended the throne and through her wisdom and charming personality guided the destinies of the kingdom through troublous times. But the political forces were too strong at the time to leave the king and queen in peace. Akbar was extending his influence to the little kingdom and Yusuf Shah was compelled to offer his allegiance in person to the emperor. The latter detained him and Yusuf had to spend the rest of his life in Bihar, away from his home and his beloved queen.

It was this forced separation from her husband that brought out the best *'lol'* pieces from the queen-poetess. In her plaintive songs replete with the pangs of separation from her beloved husband she poured forth her heart.

> The distant meadows are in bloom.
> With flowers in various colours spread far and wide,
> come, let us go to the mountain meads.
> Sweet is the ritual of love.
> I would deck you, my love, with ornaments
> And in henna dye your hands.
> I would anoint the body with fragrant kisses.

Offer you wine in golden goblets
And give the lotus of love which blooms in the lake of my heart.
Come, come, my Lover of Flowers.

A century later there is yet another woman, this time a Kashmiri Panditani, by name Arnimal, whose lyrics have captivated the hearts of Kashmiris. Her songs have been set to music and their imagery and pathos are moving to the extreme. Born in a well-to-do family, Arnimal was deserted early by her husband, Munshi Bhawanidas, a profound Persian scholar and a prolific writer. This desertion awakened the muse in Arnimal. Laments she:

My complexion which was like July jessamine
Has assumed the pallor of the yellow faded rose.
O, when will he come and let me have
A look at his beloved face.
Flowers have bloomed in my father's home,
But thou comest not and I feel like one
Accursed, alone and scoffed by all.
God grant happiness to my beloved !
Let him be kind to others if he will.
I have at least the satisfaction that my love is happy.
I plighted my troth to thee.
Why did you break your plighted word?
O sweet, O dear,
I long for thee.

Her poetry is devoid of the mystic touch and of religious experienes. It speaks of the heart of the human soul. After separation from her husband, the spinning wheel became her constant companion, and she composed her songs in tune with the sound of the revolving wheel:

Do not murmur and grumble
O spinning wheel !
Thy straw-rings I shall oil
Raise thy head from under the earth, O hyacinth.

With Arnimal ends the second, the *lol,* phase of Kashmiri poetry. Thenceforth Kashmiri was the medium of expression of several talented poets and writers. Voluminous literature was produced on mysticism, epic poetry, romance, biography, fables and folklore. A dictionary and a grammar of the language were also compiled. This upsurge in Kashmiri, however, took place in the recent past.

Dance, Drama and Music

That Islam did not enter Kashmir in its puritanic form was mainly responsible for the encouragement extended by the Sultans and Mughals to the cultivation of fine arts by the people. The tolerant cult of Sufism which predominated during this period was partial to dance and music which it believed to be essential in bringing about that state of ecstasy which enabled men to see God face to face.

The traditions in dance did not, therefore, die with the advent of Islam. But as in other branches of learning, the classical dance forms were materially altered with the absorption of influences from the dance technique of Persia and Central Asia. This, however, took considerable time to develop. During the early Muslim rule, the Indian classical dances continued to hold their ground.

What form dancing took during the early Muslim period has been fortunately described by Jonaraja and Srivara in their Chronicles. The latter was an accomplished musician himself and rose to be the head of the music department during Hassan Shah's reign. We learn from him that the dancers and musicians of his time were well versed in the art and understood all its modes and intricacies. Zain-ul-abidin was a great patron of dance, drama and music. There were at his court several accomplished dancers and musicians who "were learned and dignified and displayed their taste and intelligence on the stage. The renowned Tara and the actors sang various songs to the *naracha* tune, and to every kind of music and the songstress Utsava who was even like Cupid's arrow, charming to the eye and proficient in dance, both swift and slow, entranced everybody. The dancers, who described the forty-nine different emotions seemed even like ascending and descending notes of music. As they danced and sang, the eye and the ear of the audience seemed to contend for the keenest enjoyment"[11]

Sultan Hassan Shah was a musician himself and he naturally patronised dancers and musicians. He had a troupe of court dancers, who gave performances on the occasion of festivals, for the edification of the king and his courtiers. "The female dancers of the king", writes Srivara, "shone beauteously and bright like the lamps at night, they were inflamed by the god of love and were young and full of motion, even as the lamps were fed by wax, and were new and supplied with wick." Srivara records the names of three *danseuse* — Ratnamala, Dipamala,

11. Srivara. p. 133.

and Nripamala — who distinguished themselves in their art.

He has a few words about the ornaments of Ratnamala and the way of dressing her hair."Her song was without a fault, her person was decorated with jewels. The beauty of her face was nectar and a drop of nectar hung from her nose in the form of a pearl pendant. The pearls which hung interwoven in the locks of hair fell on her cheeks and looked as drops of nectar melting away from her moonlike face."[12]

Hussain Shah Chak (1563-70) was also a connoisseur of dance and music. During his tolerant reign, arts and letters flourished and people celebrated fairs and festivals with great eclat. Srivara writes "Many a time the king witnessed the dances of beautiful women, and looked at their youthful beauties, and heard their songs, and gave them clothes of gold and of silver."[13]

With the advent of Mughal rule in 1586, Kashmir received the impact of art influences from Delhi where the classical Indian dancing had already absorbed the technique of the dance forms of Turkistan. During their numerous visits to the Valley, the emperors and their courtiers witnessed dance performances in their enchanting gardens and other beauty spots. The dancers recited songs in Persian instead of in Sanskrit. The Indian *ghagra* and the Turkish cap of a Hafiza (as the danseuse came to be known) reflect a remarkable moulding of Indian and Persian styles into a new synthesis. Sufism was mainly responsible in bringing it about. The very names *Hafiza* and *Sufiana Kalam* imply Sufi influence.

The Hafiza dance became popular among both the upper classes and the general public from the Mughal period down to the beginning of the present century. Even some of the tyrannical Pathan governors fell a prey to the charms of the Hafizas. Amir Khan Jawansher, for instance, maintained a large troupe at State expense. He would spend most of his time in the gardens on the Dal, enjoying the graceful dance and entrancing music of his favourite Hafizas.

The Hafizas belonged to a class of professional dancers who had to undergo a long and exacting training under expert masters. The orchestra accompanying them was invariably of the *Sufiana Kalam* type — *Santoor, Saz-i-Kashmir, Sitar* and *Tabla*. They sang Kashmiri and Persian couplets and ghazals, explaining the meaning with

12. Ibid., p. 232.
13. Ibid., p. 393.

appropriate gestures and movements of hands, feet and eyes, swaying the body at each step half-way around to left or right. They wore a dress very much corresponding to that worn by the kathak dancers in northern India — a tight-fitting short blouse and a skirt of enormous width which was worn gathered tightly about the waist, an embroidered cap, draped over by a *dopatta* of filmy gauze-like silk.

Usually, two Hafizas took part in a performance. The dance would begin with music from the supporting orchestra, the Hafizas taking up the refrain with suitable movements and gestures. They moved in a semicircle with short steps gliding effortlessly across the floor. The movement of feet required great agility and long practice. The dancers also brought into play their eyes as much as the part of the body which required skilful muscle control in order to express various modes and emotions.

Side by side with the Hafiza dance for the sophisticated audiences, there developed a popular one for the common people's entertainment. Probably introduced by the Afghans from Kabul, the *Bacha* dance is still very popular with village audiences, particularly during the harvest time. A boy in his teens with long hair is trained in the Hafiza style of dancing and made to don a similar dress. Instead of a more elaborate and highly skilled orchestra which accompany the Hafiza, the *Shahnai* and an ordinary *dholak* supply the music.

The stage technique seems to have been fairly developed in Zain-ul-abidin's time. "The stage was like a garden where the lamps on it looked like rows of the Champaka flower......In some places rows of lamp- were reflected on the water.... and those who were at a distance doubted if the lights were really lamps, or the spirits of former kings assembled to view the present sovereign."[14]

Yodhabhatta, a poet in Kashmiri is recorded to have composed a drama, "pure like a mirror, called the *Jainaprakasa*, in which he gave an account of the king."[15]

And the people witnessed the drama on the "stage effulgent with decorations" and "distinguished by the excellence of sense, gestures, and feelings" as a "four-faced god."[16]

From some references in the later Sanskrit Chronicles, it can be

14. Srivara, p. 133-34
15. Ibid., p. 136.
16. Ibid.

inferred that dramatic performances were regularly given by professional "actors, skilled in acting, and graceful like so many moons placed in a row. Jesters were like fun personified, with their hanging breasts and artificial beards, with the movements of their teeth and brows, with their jests and antics, their laughter, and the rolling of their eyes, expressive of various emotions, and with their cries, mimicking the cries of animals."[17]

The descendants of these professional actors, the *Bhands or Bhagats* are still found in some villages in Kashmir. "Their acting", says Lawrence, "is excellent and their songs are often very pretty. They are clever at improvisation and are fearless as to its results. One of their favourite themes is the caricature of village life which is often very amusing and exact."[18]

Perhaps in no other department of art is the synthesis of Indian and Persian influences discernible in medieval Kashmir, as in music. In a country where we find a Mullah translating the *Mahabharata* from Sanskrit, and a Pandit writing a devotional hymn in Persian, there is nothing surprising about the evolution of the distinctive classical music known as *Sufiana Kalam* with its style borrowed from Persian music and its *maqams* corresponding to the Indian *ragas.*

The traditions of classical and folk music were assiduously maintained in the time of the Sultans who were one and all great lovers of music, some of them being highly proficient in the art. Sultan Zain-ul-abidin was a classical singer himself and retained a large number of musicians at his court. His Chronicler, Srivara, who was not only an accomplished musician but also a learned scholar of the *Sangita Sastra,* has recorded names of some of the music masters patronised by the king. There was one Sujya, the pupil of Abdul Qadir who pleased the king with his proficiency in music. The Sultan invited masters of music from Khorasan. Mullazada who came from the latter country "received inestimable favours from the king by playing on a lute made of tortoise shell." Another, named Mulla Jamal, was a singer of Persian and Arabic songs, and so was Zaffran who sang with Srivara the "difficult Turuksha metres before the king." The king encouraged the singing of North and South Indian *ragas* as well, and also Kashmiri tunes and verses. The king introduced some new musical instruments like the Rabab from Persia and Turkistan. A poet, named Utta Soma, flourished at the royal

17. Ibid., p. 230
18. Lawrence, *Valley,* p. 312.

court. He used to write verses in the Kashmiri language, and besides being the author of the king's biography,wrote a book. "named *Manaka*, on music which he dedicated to the Sultan.... when Dongar Sen, the Raja of Gwalior heard of the Sultan's taste for music he sent him all the standard books on Indian music."[19]

Zain-ul-abidin's son, Haider Shah, learnt to play on the lute from his father's tutor, the celebrated Khwaja Abdul Qadir, and on other instruments from Pandit Srivara.[20] He was so well skilled in playing on the lute that, as Srivara records, "he gave lessons even to professors". Another musician at his court, Vahlala, who earned the favour of the king, played on the Rabab.

But it was Sultan Hassan Shah who organised the teaching of music on a methodical basis and appointed professors and teachers to run classes in his department of Music. Pandit Srivara who was "the head of a section of this Department", records that Sultan Hassan Shah's fame rested on his patronage of music and on his being a master of this art. "The king had composed a book of songs in Persian language and in the dialect of Hindustani, and who does not praise him for it ?"[21] He is reputed to have had over a thousand classical musicians at his court. He invited Karnatak musicians to Kashmir who popularised a number of Karnatak *ragas* there. "The singers from Karnata", says Srivara, "sat gracefully before the king as if they represented the six tunes *viz:* Kedara, Ganda, Gandhara, Desha, Bhangala, and Malava."[22]

The most skilful musicians at his court were Wahab-ud-din and Siksakara. "Their charming voice issued from their faultless throat and pleased all men; they had studied the art of singing and were well skilled in instruments."

His fame as a patron of music spread far and wide. A celebrated musician named Pavarakdana "came to Kashmir from his distant country and sang songs composed by himself in the assembly and the king was pleased with him and showered gold on him."[23] At the end of the recital, the king asked Srivara to hold a discussion on music with the visiting professor. "And when the discussion in the assembly had been closed by a reference to books on music", records Srivara,

19. Sufi, *Kashir,* Vol,II, p. 551.
20. Srivara, p. 188
21. Ibid., p. 204
22. Ibid., p. 231.
23. Ibid, p. 233.

"and when Pavarakdana heard me speak about duet songs, he expressed his wonder, and exclaimed that the Kashmirians were wonderfully skilful people, knowing all the Sastras." And the king suitably rewarded his court musician on this victory.

Among the Chak Sultans, Hussain Shah and Yusuf Shah were great patrons of dance and music. Hussain Shah is said to have been greatly enamoured of his musicians and when pleased with their performances used to "give them cloth of gold and silver" in reward. Yusuf Shah was a connoisseur of music and his queen, Habba Khatun was a musician herself. She introduced the melody of *Rast Kashmiri.*

Mirza Haider Dughlat, during his stay in Kashmir as its virtual ruler in the middle of the 16th century, devoted much of his time and attention to music. Jehangir speaking of Mirza Haider's interest in music at that time says: "There were many skilled people there. They were skilled in music, and their lutes, dulcimers, harps, drums and flutes were celebrated."

The Mughals do not seem to have been very enthusiastic about the musicians of Kashmir, although Akbar paid "much attention to the art" and " there were numerous musicians at court, Hindus, Iranis Turanis and Kashmiris."

Kashmiri music which shows strong resemblances to both Indian and Persian music has, however, a distinctive and fascinating pattern of its *maqams* or *ragas.* Although they have a large number of percussion and strung instruments, the music is, in the main, vocal. There is hardly any 'solo' music, it being chiefly sung in chorus. Music making is a community activity. There is no individualism run riot, there are no prima donnas, no virtuosi as such. In this respect Kashmiri music is unique.

Even the *Sufiana Kalam,* which lays stress on the words or text of the songs, is always sung in chorus. The metre of the verse falls well into the shape of the *tala,* the *bols* of which, incidently, are very different from those of India. It has about 54 *maqams* (modes), out of which some bear Indian names like *Bhairavi, Lalit,* and *Kalyan,* while others have Persian names as, for example, *Isfahani, Dugah, Panjgah, Iraq, Rast-i, Khafif* and *Turki Zarb.* The *maqams,* too have their time significance, that is, some of them are morning *maqams,* some evening and so on. Accompaniments are invariably in unison and all songs are preceded by a kind of *alap.*

Of the instruments, the Santoor is the Veena of Kashmir. It has 100 strings stretched over a hollow wooden frame of mulberry wood. These are played with two little delicate sticks, beautifully carved and slightly curved at the end. The range of the instrument is limited only to an octave and a half. There are eight strings to each note and it is this duplication of strings that gives the Santoor the quality of something like a good harpsichord with an eight foot pedal. There are other instruments in use in classical music — the Saz which is bowed, the Kashmiri Sitar and a Dukra.

The most popular and attractive instrument used in folk music is the Rabab, introduced originally by Zain-ul-abidin from Turkistan. It can be described as a kind of predecessor to the Indian Sarod. It is simpler and the difference in tone is due to the slightly different construction of the instrument and to the fact that the playing strings are of gut, not of steel.

Painting

With the advent of Islam in the 14th century, the delineation of living forms receded to the background, and in its place floral designs and calligraphy became the forte of the artists of Kashmir. The formal prohibition by the Muhammadan law of the representation of animate nature in art resulted in virtual suppression of painting and sculpture as fine arts in all countries under Muhammadan rule, from the founding of the Caliphate of Baghdad down to the beginning of the 13th century. But with the decline of the power of the Caliphs, the prohibition ceased to have full effect and consequently we find Sultan Zain-ul-abidin encouraging painting. Mulla Jamil, his court musician, was pre-eminent as a painter as well.

The unsettled times which followed Zain-ul-abidin's reign, drove art to the background and it was not till the conquest of the Valley by Akbar, that painting came into its own. Akbar's dictum that "a painter had quite peculiar means of recognising God," removed the ban on painting of animate objects. "For, a painter in sketching anything that has life, and in devising the limbs one after another, must come to feel that he cannot bestow personality upon his work, and is thus forced to thank God, the Giver of Life, and will thus increase his knowledge."[24]

"Akbar," says Abul Fazal, "had from his earliest youth shown a great

24. *Ain-i-Akbari*, Trans, by Blochmann, Vol.I, p. 108

interest in painting and given it every encouragement, regarding it both as a means of study and as an amusement.: The Kashmiri painter taking his cue from the court painters, produced fine specimens of miniatures and developed a style of his own, known as the Kashmiri *Qalam*. Whereas the main subjects dealt with were secular in conformity with the fashion of the day, the religious themes were not neglected.

Several pieces of Kashmiri *Qalam* are still extant in the Srinagar Museum, and in a few private collections. During Jehangir's reign, this school attained its zenith. He prided himself on being an excellent connoisseur of painting and did a great deal to stimulate the art in Kashmir.

The Kashmiri painter obtained a delicate shade by allowing water to stand until it had completely evaporated, thus depositing a slight sediment. The process known as *abina* gave a charming tone to the picture. "Water", says Sufi, "was, of course, the principal medium through which all the pigments were applied, but with this certain fixatives were mixed, such as gum, glue, raw sugar and linseed water."[25]

The Kashmiri artist invariably brought into his painting the beauty and grandeur of a typical Kashmir landscape. Several paintings show local peculiarities in social customs, economic conditions and dress, and these have been depicted faithfully in a portrait of Sheikh Nur-ud-din, the patron saint of Kashmir. A running stream, a chain of hills, green verdure and local fauna are boldly represented, and the Kangri, the wooden sandals, the *pattu* garments and the grass matting give us a clue to the social and economic conditions of the times in which the artist lived. Another remarkable feature of the paintings of this time is that besides the kings and courtiers, the artist wielded his brush freely to portrait Muslim saints and apostles which shows the freedom and tolerance allowed in the sphere of art and culture.

The Kashmiri artist, however, excelled in producing book illustrations. Numerous manuscripts in Sanskrit and Persian, discovered during the last two centuries, are copiously illustrated with miniature paintings of exquisite beauty. A fine collection of mythological scenes with beautifully designed and illuminated ornaments was exhibited in the Indian Art Exhibition held in Delhi in 1903. This consisted of 72 illustrations from the *Ramayana*. The owner gave the following particulars regarding these:

"The pictures formed part of a Sanskrit *Ramayana* which was

25. *Kashir*, Vol.II, p. 556

written in golden letters in Kashmir during Jehangir's time. The text for some reasons was destroyed and the pictures taken out and preserved. It is known that the book remained in the King's library for centuries but fell into the hands of a soldier during the mutiny of 1857, when shortly thereafter it was purchased by me. The beauty of these paintings is remarkable and their faithful portraiture of Indian life of considerable historic value."

With the Hindu painters of the times, the most favourite theme was Saivism. We are presented with many pictures dedicated to this aspect of Hinduism. A typical example is the representation of the great *Yagna* of Daksaprajapati, the father of Sati. The background to the story of this religious legend in which Sati immolates herself for the insulting treatment meted out by her father to her husband, Lord Siva, is conveyed in several side scenes. But the main theme is the solemn and sad aftermath when the interrupted *Yagna* concluded by Daksaprajapati bearing the head of a goat with which the Lord, on the entreaty of the assembled gods and rishis, brings him to life again. On every face from that of the attendants to the Holy Trinity — Brahma, Visnu and Maheswar — are writ large horror, remorse and penitence.

In contrast to this painting of solemn awe there is one depicting Siva as *Nataraj*. With Sakti seated on a lotus throne in the bosom of the snowclad Himalayas, and gods, and goddesses watching in ecstasy the rhythmic movements of the Lord, the painting is a masterpiece of aesthetic representation. The depiction of Kashmirian landscape, dress and form of the figures, cannot escape notice.

Apart from book illustrations and the portraiture of the ten Avataras of Visnu, most of the paintings are devoted to Durga in the form of the 18-handed Sharika, or four-handed Ragnia, conforming to the representation of philosophic conceptions of Kashmir Saivism.

"The accession of Aurangzeb in 1658", observes Havel, "completely altered the privileged position which artists had enjoyed at the Mughal Court, and from that time interest is mainly concentrated on the independent Hindu schools, the most important of which were located in Rajaputana and Gujarat, and later on in some of the Himalayan principalities."[26] During the later 18th and beginning of the 19th century, therefore, the Kashmiri artists influenced by the painters of Basohli and Kangra, produced some specimens of secular themes. An attempt was made to produce portraits conforming to realism, and there

26. E.B.Havel. *Indian Sculpture and Painting,* p. 209-10.

are some specimens of the depiction of historical and descriptive subjects.

Calligraphy

The medieval painter of Kashmir had a restricted field to work in, particularly with regard to wall-painting or murals. Every strict Muhammadan valued calligraphy as a finer art than that of the picture painter, for it could not be suspected as irreligious. "The letter, a magical power, is spiritual geometry, emanating from the pen of invention; a heavenly writ from the hand of fate" — so says Abul Fazal.

There were eight calligrapy systems recognised in the Muhammadan world. With their deft artistic fingers, Kashmiri artists excelled in penmanship. Sultan Zain-ul-abidin is believed to have first imported a number of calligraphists from Central Asia, and soon Kashmir produced artistically written manuscripts with illumined borders.

Muhammad Hussain of Kashmir was the court calligraphist of Akbar and was honoured by the title of *Zarin Qalam* (of golden pen). Abdul Fazal says that Muhammad Hussain surpassed his master, Maulana Abdul Aziz. His extensions and curvatures show everywhere a proper proportion to each other, and art critics consider him equal to Mulla Mir Ali. Jehangir calls him "the chief of the elegant writers of the day", and as a mark of his great appreciation of the artist, presented him with an elephant. Muhammad Hussain died in 1611, six years after Akbar's death.[27] His contemporary, Ali Chaman, was also a noted calligraphist at Akbar's court.

Another noted calligraphist, Muhammad Murad Kashmiri, flourished at the court of Shah Jehan. The emperor conferred upon him the title of *Shirin Qalam* (the sweet pen). "His influence over contemporary calligraphists was extraordinary. The curvature of his letters was universally acclaimed to he superb. Muhammad Muhsin, the younger brother of Muhammad Murad, was also a well-known calligraphist."[28]

Shah Jehan patronised another Kashmiri calligraphist, Mulla Baqir who was considered to be a master of *Nasta'liq, Naskh* and *Shikast.*[29]

The Kashmiri scribe used a reed-pen in writing and as a miniature painter his line acquired thereby more uniformity and regularity, the precision of a medallist rather than the fluency of the habitual brush

27. Sufi,*Kashir*. Vol.II, p. 559.
28. Ibid.
29. *Tazkira-i-Khushnavisan*, pp. 100-101.

writer. He invented an ink which could not be washed off with water and his manuscripts were thus in great demand.

Architecture

"The mosques and *Ziarats* (tombs of saints) of Kashmir converted to Islam since 1346." observes Dr Goetz, "seem to be an adaptation of the preceding wooden architecture of the last Medieval period: cubic block houses with a low pyramidal grass roof and a *ma'zina* on top, the spire of which is obviously an adaptation of the Buddhist *chhatravali* and Hindu *Sikhara.*"

Although the wooden architecture is prominently associated with the Muhammadan rule in Kashmir, there is no doubt that the mode that is still largely used had an ancient history. Even during the Hindu and Buddhist period, religious and secular buildings were constructed in timber, as is evidenced by several references in the *Rajatarangini* to the founding of towns and cities of which, due to the impermanence of the material used in their construction, there is now no trace. In support of its ancient usage may be quoted the very style of this wooden architecture, and its suitability to the climate, country and the needs of the people. Although, in the matter of this wooden architecture, the Muhammadans carried on the established tradition of the Valley and adopted the architectural style unchanged. They adapted it to their own use; gave it a new complexion by grafting on it the structural forms and decorative motifs peculiarly associated with Muslim architecture. They gave it, for instance, a spaciousness that could hardly have been dreamt of by the older Hindu builders.

Sultan Zain-ul-abidin appears to have encouraged and patronised the wooden architecture in Kashmir. Srivara, his court historian, gives a long list of buildings that he constructed in "brick and wood." Some of the famous palaces he had built were extant during the rule of Mirza Haider Dughlat who records that the sultan built a palace, all of wood, in Zainagir, and on the island in the Wular lake. "First of all," records the Mirza, "he emptied a quantity of stones into the lake, and on those constructed a foundation or floor of closely-fitting stone measuring two hundred square *gaz* (yards) in extent, and ten *gaz* in height. Hereupon he built a charming palace, and planted pleasant groves of trees, so that there can be but few more agreeable places in the world."

About the Sultan's palace in the capital, the Mirza records: "It has

twelve storeys some of which contain fifty rooms, halls and corridors. The whole of this lofty structure is built of wood." Mirza Dughlat, in another place, in a somewhat florid style, adds: In the town, there are many lofty buildings constructed of fresh-cut pine. Most of these are, at least, five storey high; each storey contains apartments, halls, galleries and towers. The beauty of their exterior defies description, and all who behold them for the first time, bite the finger of astonishment with the teeth of admiration."[30]

Mosque of Madin Sahib

With the decline of Hindu rule following a long period of political instability and chaos, the art of the stone mason had been too long forgotten for the Muhammadans to revive it. True, there are a few instances of their having converted stone temples into mosques and tombs, but this was done merely by using such of the old architectural members as they could and completing the rest of the structure in rubble or brick. For example, the mosque of Madin Sahib at Zadibal in Srinagar, which bears an inscription recording its erection in the year 1444 — in the reign of Sultan Zain-u-abidin — is built on the plinth of an ancient Hindu temple. To the north of the mosque is the tomb of the saint. The tomb is celebrated for the remarkable tile decoration on its eastern wall. Mr Nicholls of the Archaeological Survey of India who visited the tomb in1905 found the left spandrel of the entrance arch adorned with a beautifully executed beast with the body of a leopard and the trunk of a human being, apparently shooting with bow and arrow at its own tail while a fox was quietly looking on among flowers and "cloud forms."[31] Sir John Marshall is, however, of the opinion that the tile work does not belong to the original edifice, but to a later restoration of the Mughal period. "The tile work, remarks Sir John in his Note written in 1908 on Archaeological work in Kashmir, "is very valuable — one of the most valuable antiquities which Kashmir possesses, and it is pathetic to see it trampled on and defaced or destroyed by the villagers. There are only three monuments that I know of in India where such tiles can be found."

Tomb of Zain-ul-Abidin's Mother

Another monument in masonry of Zain-ul-abidin's reign is the tomb of his mother in Srinagar on the right bank of the river below

30. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, Trans. Ellias and Ross, p. 425.
31. Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1906-7, p. 161.

Zaina Kadal. One of the oldest Muhammadan buildings in Kashmir, it has been erected on the basement of an older temple, the plan of which seems to have suited the construction in brick of the conventional Muslim tomb. The figure is octagonal and ornamented with Saracenic arches surmounted by a single dome, with four smaller ones surrounding it. "In each wall-face a pointed archway has been set, and there are the remains of fluting and arcading in the tall drums of the domes, while the inner doorway seems to have been an attempt at a rare type of horse-shoe arch. The design and execution of this tomb indicate that it was the production of men accustomed to working in brick masonry, and in a method implying Persian influence."[32]

Of mixed construction also are the stone mosque at Bijbihara and the Jama Masjid at Pampore, only the basement of the latter being composed of an old stone temple, the upper portion being in the wood and brick mode, characteristic of the medieval wooden architecture.

"From these small series of examples", observes Percy Brown, "It seems fairly obvious that an attempt to convert the Islamic architecture of Kashmir into a form of provincialized Persian, in the face of the firmly established indigenous timber tradition, could not be maintained."[33]

Medieval Wooden Architecture

The technique of the famous wooden architecture of Kashmir consists of laying one log horizontally on another, usually crosswise in the form of 'headers and stretchers' as in brickwork. Not only the walls, but also piers for the support of any superstructure were erected in this fashion. For pillars single tree trunks were generally employed, a whole forest being, for instance, transferred from the hill slopes to the aisles of the Jama Masjid at Srinagar. The simplest use of this cantilever building method was evident in the old bridges which spanned the Jhelum in Srinagar. The first permanent bridge built by Zain-ul-abidin was named after him Zaina Kadal. The piers built on the cantilever system comprised layers of logs piled crosswise upon one another with stones intersticed between each layer. The whole looked like an inverted pyramid with its truncated apex resting on a solidly built masonry cutwater. The piers were thus sufficiently strong to withstand a reasonably strong flood current below and a sufficiently heavy load above.

32. Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Islamic Period)*, p. 87.
33. Ibid, p. 88.

It was on this system that most of the wooden buildings were constructed during the medieval period and after. The logs were here neatly squared and the space between each course filled up with brickwork or glazed tiles. There is no attempt at dovetailing the panels or even the courses of logs, the chief fastening device being a roughly made wooden pin. With the superabundance of building timber in the form of deodar *(Cedrus deodara)* available in the Valley, the medieval carpenter made no attempt at devising light struts, trusses or diagonal members to secure lateral rigidity. Consequently it is a system of a dead weight bearing directly downwards, on much the same principle as in the older stone temples.

The most telling characteristic of the Islamic architecture of Kashmir is the treatment of the roof, with its projecting eaves, supported on long rows of brackets and adorned with beautifully carved pendants at the corners; with its layer of earth over birch-bark sheets to make the roof watertight; and crowning all its tall and graceful steeple. To add dignity and grace to the building, the clever carpenter supplied the elaborately designed tracery in window screens and balustrades, the magnificent pillars of deodar in the larger halls and the charming *Khatamband* ceilings.

Khanaqah of Shah Hamadan

A typical example in the medieval wooden style of architecture is the *Khanaqah* of Shah Hamadan in Srinagar. Originally built in 1395 in the reign of Sultan Sikandar to commemorate the visit to Kashmir of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani, popularly known as Shah Hamadan, the building was twice destroyed by fire, in 1479 and 1731. The present mosque was rebuilt by Abul Barkat Khan in 1732 and has stood since then with occasional repairs. Standing on the right bank of the Jhelum, this building with its surroundings and background of distant sunny mountains presents an enchanting spectacle.

The pyramidal roof is broken into three equal portions ending in a graceful steeple, 125 feet from the ground with the gilt umbrella and other ornaments at the top. The four corners of the roof are adorned with wooden tassels. Massive beams of deodar intersticed with bricks, form the walls, relieved by well-proportioned balconies in the upper storey, the floor and roof of which are supported by light and elegantly carved wooden pillars. Besides, there are arcades, verandahs, and porticos, with their opening filled with lattice work *(pinjra)* and enriched with carved wooden insertions.

The interior consists of a large hall, 63 feet by 43 feet, with 14 chambers or cells on its northern and southern sides. The walls are covered entirely with wooden panels of geometrical designs and the ceiling is supported in the centre by four wooden columns ornamented with wooden pieces in fish-bone pattern.

Jama Masjid in Srinagar

But an outstanding and impressive and also an 'architectural' building in the wooden style of Kashmir is the Jama Masjid at Srinagar. Originally built by Sultan Sikandar as early as 1400 AD and enlarged by his son, Sultan Zain-ul-abidin, the mosque with "four doors on the four sides and four high minarets rising to the sky and decorated with wonderful sculptures,"[34] has passed through many vicissitudes. It was destroyed by fire during the reign of Sultan Hassan Shah (1472-84 AD) who took up the work of its reconstruction. It was completed after his death by the commander-in-chief, Ibrahim Magrey. During Jehangir's reign the mosque again caught fire and the emperor who was then in Srinagar, himself took part in fighting the flames. Subsequently he entrusted the reconstruction of the mosque to Malik Haider Chaudura, the historian-architect of Kashmir. The mosque again caught fire in 1674 during the reign of Aurangzeb. The present construction is the restored mosque by Aurangzeb, the plan, however, being that of Sultan Sikandar's original construction. Having fallen into disrepair the mosque was extensively restored recently. In its design this huge structure contains all the essential components of the Kashmir type of wooden building, but so disposed as to form a conception approaching more nearly to that of the orthodox mosque plan with four *aiwans* arranged crosswise and interconnected by naves of huge wooden pillars.

Roughly square in shape, its northern and southern sides are 384 feet long. A larger Gothic arch opens from the patio on to the principal altar, over which the steepled roof is much higher than elsewhere. Three more pagoda-shaped steeples in the middle of each cloister serve as minarets from which the *muezzin* calls the faithful to prayer. The roof of the four surrounding cloisters, each 360 feet long, is supported by two rows of pillars, numbering 378. The pillars under the domes and spires are more than 40 feet high, while those under the main building measure above 21 feet in height. The rows of straight deodar pillars lend an air of grandeur to the interior of the mosque. It looks like a forest trimmed and

34. Srivara, p. 236.

transplanted from the mountain side to its present position.

The medieval wooden architecture of Kashmir is also represented in the numerous mosques doting the Valley. The *Ziarat* Aishmuqam, perched on the scarp of a hill 500 feet above the Pahalgam road was built in memory of Baba Zain-ud-din, one of the four disciples of Sheikh Nur-ud-din. The mosque is noteworthy for its beautiful lattice-work and decorative panels. The mosque at Tsrar Sharif built in honour of the patron-saint of Kashmir, Sheikh Nur-ud-din, is a large oblong building with a wing at either end, and is built of hewn logs placed transversely, course upon course, on a plinth of brick masonry. The central hall measures 80 feet by 60 feet, the elevation being about 30 feet. the roof which rises in tiers is supported by four pillars.

Another typical mosque built in the traditional mode of architecture is the one at Shopyan, 29 miles south of Srinagar. The general outline is that of a Chinese pagoda, but the Saracenic influence is noticeable in its arches and cornices, windows and doors, which have rich lattice-worked panels.

Pinjra or Lattice-Work

The *pinjra* or lattice-work of Kashmir is now a forgotten art. Built up of minute laths arranged in geometric forms so as to display their edges, the *pinjra* panel is held in position by the pressure the laths exert one against the other, by certain main lines being dowelled together and by the frame of the panel within which they are assorted. They are rarely if ever glued together and in good work are so accurately fitted and balanced that they do not fall to pieces even when the frame is removed.

The *pinjra* has a history of its own. There is a belief that the carpenters of Kashmir copied it from the Calukian sculptors and stone masons. But since there is no trace of any specimens earlier than the Mughal period, it is difficult to say with certainty where the art originated. No doubt the Saracenic influence which predominated during and after the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin in the arts and crafts of Kashmir, had a lot to do in the designing and manufacture of *pinjra* panels.

Many designs were produced, the favourite ones being the 'rising sun' and the 'cobweb'. The uses to which the *pinjra* panels were put appear to have been varied. Windows, doors, railings, ventilators, ornamental screens and partitions were all done in *pinjra* work. Pasted with thick handmade paper with an oil-daub in the centre of each, the *pinjra* panels shut off the chill blast of winter wind, but let in enough

light through the translucent oily paper.

Mughal Architecture

In the 16th and 17th centuries the Mughal emperors and their courtiers made an effort to revive the art of stone building in Kashmir, not however in its ancient form, but according to the style in vogue in Agra and Delhi. But Kashmiris had by then completely lost the art of handling stones and Akbar who constructed a fort round the Hari Parbat hill to enclose his newly founded city, had to import 'two hundred Indian master builders' to carry out his project, as the local artisans appear to have been only accustomed to working in wood. This fort which was built during Akbar's third visit to Kashmir in May 1597, is nearly three miles in circumference, and is now in the main part in ruins. Architecturally there is nothing noteworthy about it, except perhaps the main gateway, Kathi Darwaza, which is still intact. It is a simple structure comprising a domed chamber in the middle with two side recesses. Its only external decorations are rectangular and arched panels, and two beautiful medallions in high relief. Another gateway facing west, the Sangin Darwaza, is more expansive and ornate, its elevation consisting of a well-proportioned arched recess containing the entrance gateway, and elegant oriel windows on each side.

Pathar Masjid

The two other stone buildings of Mughal workmanship are of a slightly later date. The Pathar Masjid, situated on the left bank of the river Jhelum and nearly opposite the Shah Hamadan mosque, is the largest surviving Mughal building in Kashmir. Built of polished grey limestone, its interior is divided into three passages by two rows of massive stone arches which extend from one end to another, the roof of the compartments between them being handsomely ribbed and vaulted. The facade consists of nine arches including the large one in the centre. The mosque was built by Nur Jehan in 1620, but did not become popular on account of the insulting remark of the queen who when asked the cost of construction, replied, pointing to her jewel-studded slipper, "as much as this". The construction was supervised by the well-known historian-architect of Kashmir, Malik Haider Chaudura.

Mosque at Hazaratbal

The mosque at Hazaratbal on the western bank of the Dal lake, has acquired special sanctity for its being the repository of a sacred hair of

the Prophet. The mosque was originally built by Shah Jehan and depicts a curious blend of the Mughal and Kashmirian architecture. The walls and the portico are built in brick masonry, resting on a plinth of dressed stone. The roof in three tiers follows the traditional style of Islamic architecture of Kashmir.

How the sacred relic came to Kashmir is an interesting story in itself. Originally it passed on to the descendants of the Holy Prophet, from father to son till it reached Sayyid Abdullah, the *mutawali* of the Prophet's shrine in Medina. In the year 1634 AD the Sayyid left for India with his family and arrived at Bijapur (Deccan) two years later. He was granted a Jagir by the ruler there and he stayed on for 23 years. On his death the sacred relic passed to his son, Sayyid Hamid. The latter continued to live in Bijapur and when the kingdom was conquered by Aurangzeb in 1692 AD, Sayyid Hamid went to Jehanabad to get his Jagir restored.

During those days a Kashmiri trader, named Khwaja Nur-ud-din Ashawari, was carrying on a prosperous business at Jehanabad, and Sayyid Hamid being in distress sought his help. The Khwaja readily gave him the money and requested him to let him have the sacred relic. The request was promptly turned down, but the same night the Sayyid was directed in a dream by the Holy Prophet to hand over the hair relic to Khwaja Nur-ud-din.

Khwaja Nur-ud-din Ashawari left for Kashmir with the relic but at Lahore he was detained by Aurangzeb who wanted to keep the sacred relic at Ajmer. The Khwaja was deeply shocked at being relieved of the relic and he died at Lahore, expressing the last wish to a friend, Khwaja Medanish, that should he succeed in getting back the relic, it should be taken to Kashmir and lodged there at a suitable place. Aurangzeb too was directed in a dream by the Prophet to hand over the relic to Khwaja Medanish, who carried it to Kashmir where, in the words of Khwaja Azam, an eyewitness "there was great enthusiasm among the people who rushed like a stream in flood to pay their homage to the holy relic." After being kept for some time in the *Khanaqah* of Naqshband, it was finally lodged in the mosque built already by Shah Jehan at Hazaratbal. The body of Khwaja Nur-ud-din was also buried near the *Ziarat*.

Mosque of Akhund Mulla Shah

Akbar's fort at Hari Parbat and Nur Jehan's Pathar Masjid in Srinagar depict the Mughal provincial style of architecture in its temper-

ate manner, being broadly treated with the minimum amount of decoration, but at the same time avoiding undue severity. The small mosque of Akhund Mulla Shah which stands on the scarp of the Hari Parbat hill, depicts these qualities in a more pronounced manner. Its plan is singular, the design of the prayer chamber being repeated on the east side of the courtyard which forms the gateway. On the north and south are arcades, treated in the same way as the wings of the prayer chamber. The somewhat cramped courtyard may be accounted for by the slope of the hill on which it stands, and the difficulty which would have been experienced in making the prayer chamber wider. The stone lotus finial over the pulpit is the only surviving example of its kind in Kashmir. "Constructed of grey granite slabs over a core of brickwork", notices Percy Brown, "The proportions of this building, the simplicity of its surface treatment, its architectural character and manipulation generally, are all most commendable. Particularly noticeable are the archways whether plain, pointed or engrailed, as they are singularly graceful in their curves, while the scheme of the back wall exterior, with a projection to mark the recessed *Mihrab* in the interior is well conceived. In many respects this ruined and neglected structure is a model in miniature of an appropriate mosque composition."[35]

In addition to the three mosques, and the fort, there are other, structural records of the Mughals, mainly in brick masonry, some of these being sumptuous summer resorts, like the "Pari Mahal" on the Zebwan hill overlooking the Dal lake, and the numerous *Serais* or resting places on the Mughal roads over the Pir Panjal and Jhelum Valley passes. Though interesting in its arrangement of terraces, the Pari Mahal is of no special architectural significance having perhaps been hastily constructed by Dara Shikoh to house his school of Sufism and observatory.

Garden Traditions

The conspicuous contribution by the Mughals to the architectural wealth of Kashmir lies in the large number of gardens with their schemes of fountains and cascades which they built at several beauty spots in the Valley.

These gardens are famous throughout the world. Tom More in his immortal *Lalla Rookh* has painted some of these in colours so brilliant as to leave a lasting impression on the reader. The history of the development of garden designs in Kashmir is, however, closely

35. Percy Brown. op.cit., p. 88.

associated with Buddhist landscape gardening in China and Japan.

From very early times flowers and plants have been admired and cultivated in India. There are many references to gardens in old Buddhist literature and Sanskrit plays. In section CCIX of the *Adi Parva* and section III of the *Sabha Parva* of the *Mahabharata*, minute descriptions of gardens as laid out by the architect Maya are given. The sacred groves round Buddhist shrines were also among the early forms of Indian gardening.

The ancient Indian, like the Chinese, preferred still, lotus-bearing waters, pent up within paved embankments. Pleasure houses and trees crowding the garden were additions of later times. No attempt was made at ensuring running water or *ab-i-rawan* simply because in both the countries water was plentiful and rivers abounded.

Kashmir which has been endowed with an abundance of springs, lakes, glens and mountains and all kinds of beautiful flowers, is really Nature's own garden requiring no human hand to improve upon. Numerous sites can easily be found which are symptomatic of the Hindu conception of landscape gardening. Siva, the water diviner, always on the prowl in the hills and helping in releasing pent-up waters for the fertilisation of the cultivated area, is the presiding deity of Kashmir. It was He who cut open the pent-up waters of the primeval lake in the Valley near Baramula. And thus wherever a hill came down gently sloping to a water reservoir or wherever there was a spring gushing out cool and nectarlike water, the area was utilised by the early Hindus in laying out a landscape garden.

With the propagation of the Buddhist doctrine the lotus received a new significance. What the *Mihrab* (Alah is a spirit, invisible, intangible) is to the Muhammadan or the Cross of Redemption to the Christian, the Lotus is to the Buddhist and the Hindu. A lotus floating on the cosmic waters is the symbol of the creation of the world. The Buddhist and Hindu missionaries with their wide sympathies and their simple joyous love of nature travelled far and wide and wherever they went they carried the garden traditions with them. The cultivation of flowers was a religious compulsion — one had to make the early morning offering of flowers at the feet of the deity. The flowery tablelands and valleys of Central Asia from which originally the Vedic Aryans had come to India, furnished a fertile soil later for laying out of gardens by the missionaries round the Buddhist shrines and monasteries. Sir Aurel Stein in his account of the journey to the sand-buried cities of Khotan often mentions

the gardens which formed pleasant camping grounds all along his route from Kashmir to Khotan. At Yarkand the garden reserved for him, the *Chini Bagh* (Chinese Garden), "proved quite a summer palace within a large walled-in garden." Ponds filled with the sacred lotus flowers figured largely in many fresco paintings uncovered among the ruined cities north of Khotan, and adjoining one of the buried houses, the outlines of an ancient garden were distinctly traceable.

"In view of this pictorial representation," says Sir Aurel, "I feel convinced that already ancient Khotan had known the graceful lotus plant dear to the gods of India. Considering the close historical connections between Kashmir and Khotan which the local traditions recorded by Yuan Chwang indicate, it needs no effort of imagination to believe that the lotuses that once adorned the gardens of settlements now buried by the desert sand were originally derived from the great Himalayan Valley, on the lakes of which I had so often admired them."

Farther and farther as the Kashmirian monks and scholars penetrated into China they carried with them the traditions of gardening till the whole of China and Japan came under their influence. We learn from the Chinese Annals that Dharmamitra, a Kashmiri Buddhist monk who went to China early in the fifth century, founded a *vihara* at Tunghuang and planted more than 1,000 trees around it. The Indian Buddhist garden, although forgotten in the land of its birth, still survives in China and Japan, transformed and tinged by the genius of another climate and another people.

In Central Asia and Persia this garden tradition took a different shape under the Muslim rule. The first condition was always the running, life-giving water. The river of life was reproduced by directing the water flow through paved channels to a central reservoir. Artificial cascades and a scheme of fountains in the garden design were introduced and thus was created the emblem of immortality and youth, the never-ending water and the ever renewed tree. Here was *firdaus* or garden or paradise which are synonymous.

The Mughals from Babar to Shah Jehan were great lovers of gardens. They reintroduced the old Indian art from their northern homeland. Babar had imbibed the taste for garden designs in Samarkand and Ferghana where the old Indian gardens had undergone the changes mentioned. The Mughal gardens in India are thus actually copied from the gardens of Turkistan and Persia. Akbar who first brought Kashmir under his sway found the place resembling his original

home in Turkistan and at once set about laying out a garden. Jehangir and his art-minted Nur-Jehan excelled all others in laying out gardens in Kashmir. To them we owe the world famous Nishat, Shalamar, Achhabal and Verinag. Shah Jehan improved upon these, adding to Shalamar a few terraces. It is said that there were 700 Mughal gardens round the Dal lake which have now disappeared as a result of the uncertain and troubled days which followed the Mughal rule in Kashmir. But this tradition never appeared exotic in a mileu where the Kashmiri garden traditions existed before. The outward body may be Turkistani but the inner soul is Kashmiri. Kashmir thus re-embraced an art which had been carried by her sons in ancient times to countries far to the east and north.

Shalamar : The best example of the existence of a garden tradition in Kashmir from ancient times, is provided by the famous Shalamar on the Dal where as early as the time of King Pravarsena II, the founder of Srinagar, there is said to have been a villa called Mar-shala or the "Hall of Love."[36] The king used to visit a saint named Sukram Swami living near Harwan and rested at this garden villa on his way to or from that place. In course of time this villa vanished and the village that had sprung up in its neighbourhood was called Shalamar after the name of the villa.

In 1619 Jehangir laid out a garden at this spot calling it "Farah-bakhsh" or "Delightful". Eleven years later Zaffar Khan, a governor of Kashmir during Shah Jehan's reign, made an extension to this garden, calling the addition by "Faiz-bakhsh" or "Bountiful".[37]

The design of Shalamar is typically Mughal — rectangular in shape, the area being divided into a series of smaller square parterres. In all their gardens from Agra to Kashmir we find "the water running in trim stone-or-brick-edged canal down the whole length, falling from level to level in smooth cascades or rushing in tumult of white foam over carved water shutes. Below many of these waterfalls the canal flows into a larger or smaller tank, usually studded with numerous small fountains." There are shady walks and lawns with chenars in the centre and beds of flowers on either side of the canal and round water tanks.

The Shalamar is arranged in four terraces rising one above the other and of nearly equal dimensions. There is a line of tanks or reservoirs along the middle of the whole length of the garden and these

36. Stuart, *Gardens of the Great Mughals*, p. 162.
37. Pandit Anand Koul, *Archaeological Remains in Kashmir*,

are connected by a canal, 18 inches deep and from 9 to 14 yards wide. The tanks and the canal with their scheme of fountains and cascades, are lined with polished limestone, resembling black marble. The water to feed these is obtained from the Harwan stream behind the garden. It enters at the upper end; flows down from each successive terrace, in beautiful stone chutes, carved in many ingenious patterns of shell and fish, which lead to the reservoir below containing numerous fountains, and after leaving the garden, falls into the outer canal by which it is conducted to the lake.

The fourth terrace was the private portion of the garden where the ladies of the harem resided and where they stayed in the palmy days of the Mughal emperors. It contains, in its centre, a magnificent black stone pavilion which is raised upon a platform a little more than 3 feet high and 65 feet square. Its sloping roof is about 20 feet high and is supported, on each side, by a row of six elaborately carved black marble pillars, which are of polygonal shape and fluted. It was used as a banqueting hall, a favourite place for entertainments of various kinds. The effect must have been exceedingly pretty, when at night the fountains played and the canal and its cascades ran merrily, the pavilion and the garden being lit up with various coloured lamps, shedding their light upon the throng of gaudily-dressed and jewel-bedecked guests.

The pavilion is surrounded by a fine reservoir, which is 52 yards square and about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep. It is lined with stone and contains 140 large fountains. Upon each side of the terrace, built against the wall, there is also a lodge. These formed the private dwellings of the royal family. On the edge of each of the three lower terraces there is also a small pavilion which overlooks the fountains in the tank below. Each of these consists of two apartments on the side of the canal, over which is a covered archway uniting the two, and that of the lowest is supported by 16 black stone pillars which are fluted and polygonal in shape.

It was in this garden that Jehangir had the intense delight of making up the quarrel he had with his Nur Jehan "the Light of the World". The poet Moore has immortalised the scene, which he closes thus:

> And well do vanished frowns enhance,
> The charms of every brightened glance,
> And dearer seems each dawning smile,
> For having lost its light awhile:
> And happier now for all her sights,
> As on his arm her head reposes.

She whispers him with laughing eyes,
"Remember love, the feast of roses."

What changes have occurred since the time when Jehangir and Nur Jehan cast aside the cares of state and, forgetting the petty intrigues of court, roamed on the lawns of this garden! They planted, but never lived to see the full perfection of the stately chenar trees. Others have entered into their labour. Man has done much for these royal gardens, but Nature more, and it is where man has attempted least that he has succeeded best.

Nishat Bagh or the Garden of Bliss: Laid out by Asaf Khan, brother of Nur Jehan, queen of Jehangir, the Nishat is situated two miles to the south of the Shalamar, and commands a magnificent view of the Dal lake and snowcapped mountains to the far west of the Valley.

In 1633 AD this garden was visited by Shah Jehan. Finding it to be better in point of scenery than the Shalamar, he said to Asaf Khan thrice that it was a delightful garden, expecting the latter to reply that it might be accepted by the emperor as his own . But Asaf Khan kept silent and this inwardly displeased the emperor. The garden was, as it is now, supplied with water from the same stream which fed the Shalamar, and the emperor, in his anger, ordered that as the water-course belonged exclusively to the Shalamar, no water should run to any other garden from it. This at once deprived the Nishat of all its beauty. Asaf Khan who was staying in the garden, felt very sad but, of course, could do nothing. One day, observing the desolate look the garden wore for want of water, he felt exceedingly grieved, and throwing himself on his back in a corner, heaved deep sighs, and in this melancholy mood fell asleep. A servant of his knowing the cause of the grief that weighed upon him, went to the place where the stream had been blocked up and, removing the blockade, brought water to the garden. At once did the fountains begin to play and the cascades to make a pleasing noise, and this awakened Asaf Khan. He enquired, in surprise, how the water had come, and got much alarmed lest the emperor might hear of this and get annoyed. His servant stood up before him and told him that as he had seen him in sorrow for want of water in the garden, he could not bear it and, therefore, he had secretly removed the blockage from the stream. Asaf Khan upbraided him for having done so, and hastily got the stream closed up again. The news reached the ears of the emperor and he summoned the man who had committed the offence. The poor man, trembling with fear, pleaded guilty and stated, with folded hands, that he had done this because he

could not stand the sorrow of his master, caused for want of water in his garden, and that he would submit to any punishment His Imperial Majesty might award him for this offence. To the surprise and delight of all, the emperor admiring the devotion of the faithful servant, bestowed a robe of honour upon him and, besides, gave Asaf Khan a *sanad*, granting him the right of drawing water from the Shalamar stream for the Nishat Bagh.

The Nishat is arranged in ten terraces, three of which are much higher than the others. There is a line of tanks along the centre of the whole garden and these are connected by a canal about 13 feet wide and eight inches deep. The tànks and the canal are lined with polished stone. The beauty of flower-beds, with the pleasing lines of their design, is enhanced by numerous fountain jets. The stream, which feeds it enters the garden at the upper end and flows down the successive terraces in cascades formed by inclined walls of masonry covered with stone slabs beautifully scalloped to vary the appearance of the water.

There are two principal pavilions, one at the lower and the other at the upper end of the garden. The lower pavilion is double-storeyed and built of wood and plaster upon a foundation of stones. In the middle there is a reservoir about 14 feet square and 3 feet deep with a few fountains.

The upper storey has a lofty corridor on its eastern and western sides. On its northern side, there is an apartment, enclosed by lattice work, and, on the south-side, there is also a similar but smaller apartment. An opening in the middle of the floor, about 27 feet square commands a view of the fountains in the reservoir below. In front of this pavilion and upon the terrace below it, there is a large tank filled with fountains.

The upper pavilion is situated at the end of the highest terrace and from the whole layout of the garden emerges into view.

Giant plane trees *(chenars)* shade the walks, which are bordered by lines of cypresses, and all around is soft, green turf, studded with flower beds. Lofty crags rise for thousands of feet precipitously above the garden, while in the opposite direction a white, soft expanse of lake and village-dotted plain attract the eye. The best time to spend in this lovely garden is the morning when the radiance of the early dawn kisses the silvery dews with which the whole areas is bathed, and when it is shady in the garden and the lake far below is glittering with the light of the sun. The poet has truly said:

Subah dar Bagh-i-Nishat o sham dar Bagh-i-Nasim
Shalamar o lala zar o sair-i-Kashmir as to bas

"Morning at the Nashat Bagh and evening at the Nasim, Shalamar and tulip fields — these are the places of excursion in Kashmir, and none else."

Chashma Shahi: Chashma Shahi, the famous spring of pure, sparkling and cool water, attracts people from far and near. Its situation on the slope of the Zebwan hill commands a superb view of the lotus of the Dal below, and of the verdant vale across. The spot could not, therefore, escape the artistic eye of the Mughals. Under orders of the emperor Shah Jehan a small garden on the traditional Mughal pattern was laid out here by the governor, Ali Mardan Khan, in 1642 AD. There are three terraces, and the central aqueduct, tanks, waterfalls and fountains, are fed by the sparkling waters gushing out of the spring at the south end of the garden. The main aqueduct passes through the ground floor of a central pavilion and after feeding a small round reservoir, falls to the lower terrace in a fine cascade about 16 feet high.

Nasim Bagh: Across the Dal on its western shore lies the Nasim Bagh, the 'Garden of Breezes,' laid out by the emperor Shah Jehan. Containing hundreds of magnificent shady chenars (1,200 had been originally planted) which when saplings were, it is said, watered with milk — "this park lies open — a beautiful and ancient woodland — through which the lake breezes blow, making it the very abode of serene and tranquil peace, while its white-irisclusters lend it an almost feminine charm."[38]

Char Chenar: Just in front of the garden lies the island of Char Chenar so named because it has four chenars on each of the cardinal points. A garden was laid out here by prince Murad in 1614 AD, when he was governor of Kashmir. This delightful and favourite resort used to be thronged on hot summer days by picnic parties going on the Dal lake in boats, which they tied up here in order to refresh themselves under the cool and breezy shade of the chenars. To others, given to merriment, this corner was a place of gaiety, dancing and laughter — a very riot of materialism with its flower battles and all the brave music of the sensuous life. Still, to others with a religious turn of mind, it was a peaceful spot to linger at for the contemplation of the great mysteries of life, their fingers turning rosaries, their lips in prayer.

The Mughals extended the plantation of chenars. It was Jehangir who systematically planned the *char chenar* or a chenar at each of the four cardinal points, so that at whichever point the sun might be, one

38. V.C. Scott O'Connor, *The Charm of Kashmir*.

could recline in the shade of a chenar in the grove. They planted chenars in gardens, on the shores of the lakes, on the roadside and in the fields. Truly was it called the 'Royal Tree', for it could not be cut without the permission of the authorities. It was in fact the property of the State and the amount realised from the sale of its timber used to go into the State treasury.

Even Aurangzeb with his austere and puritanic habits had developed a love for the chenar. When the news of the devastating fire in Srinagar in 1674 AD in which the Jama Masjid was burnt down, was conveyed to him he anxiously enquired whether the chenars in its compound were safe. "The mosque can be rebuilt in a short time," he observed, "but a fully grown chenar could not be quickly replaced."

It was widely believed that the chenar was first introduced in Kashmir by Akbar. But the fact that the Kashmiris call it 'Bhuni', a corruption of Sanskrit 'Bhawani, Blissful Mother,' shows that it was found in the Valley from earlier times. *Akbarnama* mentions that Akbar took 34 people inside the hollow trunk of an aged chenar tree. Jehangir, too, in his *Memoirs,* makes mention of a huge chenar in the hollow trunk of which he and his seven companions with their horses could be comfortably accommodated. Evidently the trees must have been several hundred years old.

The tree is known for the huge girth of its trunk, the maximum circumference attained in Kashmir being 55 feet by a chenar in the old Mughal garden at Bijbihara, 28 miles from Srinagar on the Srinagar-Jammu road. The chenar grows all over the Valley, every village, garden and field has its quota of the 'Royal Tree'. It offers welcome, cool shade in summer. The Kashmiris believe that resting under a chenar for an hour increases the quantity of blood in a human being by as much as 10 *rattis.*

In Kashmir the chenar decorates cottages and palaces. The chenar motif is to be found on nearly all artistic goods manufactured in the Valley. In fact the chenar is in the mind of every artisan and designer. It has well been said, "Take away its chenar and the beauty of Kashmir is gone.".

It is not within the scope of the present work to give an exhaustive treatment of all the extant Mughal gardens of Kashmir. Pandit Anand Koul mentions that there were during the Mughal times as many as seven hundred of them round the Dal alone.[39] We may, however,

39. Koul, *Archaeological Remains in Kashmir.*

notice two which are important for the beautiful setting in which they have been laid out.

Achhabal: Noted for its spring, one of the finest in Kashmir, the beauty spot of Achhabal, 40 miles to the south of Srinagar, was selected by Jehan Ara, the daughter of Shah Jehan, to lay her garden at in 1620 AD, for it afforded an opportunity for man's hand to lend help to nature. Called "Begamabad", the garden, 467 feet long and 450 feet in breadth is divided into two portions. The water of the spring issues from several places near the foot of a low spur which is densely covered with deodar trees. At one place the oblique fissure from which the water gushes out, is large enough to admit a man's body. The water of the spring flows through the garden, which is traversed by three aqueducts, the central one being about 16 feet, and those on each side about 7 feet wide. Along the central aqueduct, there are two large tanks. A wooden pavilion, which is about 18 feet square rests upon a platform of masonry. There are three waterfalls in the upper part of the garden and three outside its lower end. The tanks and aqueducts are lined with stone, and a large number of fountains have been laid in them.

Verinag: Verinag is a village situated at the foot of the Banihal pass. It is called after the name of a spring there known as Verinag. According to a legend the goddess Vitasta (Jhelum) wanted to take her rise from this place, but it happened that when she came, Siva was staying there, whereupon she had to go back and then she took her rise from Vithavatur (Vitastatra), a spring about a mile to the north-west of this place. *Virah* in Sanskrit means to 'go back' and *nag* 'spring' and, as Vitasta had to go back from this place; it came to be called Virahnag or Verinag.

This spring was originally an irregular, shapeless pond, and water, oozing out from different places in it, spread about and formed a little marsh. The emperor Jehangir, whose artistic taste for polishing up the beauty of Nature is well known, saw this and at once determined to improve it. He built the octagonal tank of sculptured stones round it, so that all the water issuing from north-eastern side of the wooded hill was collected therein. This was completed in 1029 Hijra or 1620 AD.

Seven years later, Jehangir's son, Shah Jehan, who was no less a lover of natural beauty, constructed cascades and aqueducts in straight lines through and around a fine garden which he, in order to enhance further the beauty of the place, laid out in front of the spring. He also built cold and hot baths to the east of this garden, just outside of it, of which

little trace is now left.

There are two stone slabs built into the southern and western walls of the spring, on which are inscribed passages in Persian prose and verse, in praise of the spring, and the dates of the construction of the tank and aqueduct.

This broad survey of the medieval architecture of Kashmir shows that as in religion, philosophy and literature, so in architecture as well, there has been an endeavour to effect a synthesis of varied trends and influences. How happily the Kashmiri builder has succeeded in his efforts is evident from the numerous buildings and gardens dotting the Valley, which are even now objects of beauty and admiration. "Differently conditioned though the Kashmir architecture was", observes Marshall, "fashioned out of dissimilar materials and cast in a mould unlike that of any other school, it would hardly have been surprising if its development had proceeded on radically different lines. That it did not do so; that it exhibits, on the contrary, precisely the same fusion of Hindu and Muslim ideals, the same happy blend of elegance and strength, is eloquent testimony to the enduring vitality of Hindu art under an alien rule and to the wonderful capacity of the Muslim for absorbing that art into his own and endowing it with a new and greater spirit."[40]

40. *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol.III, p. 640.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

P.N.K. Bamzai, born in 1910 in a Kashmiri Pandit Family of scholarly traditions, received his first lessons in historical research from his father, Pandit Anand Koul who was the pioneer of modern research on the history and folklore of Kashmir.

He got his degree from the Panjab University. His articles and papers pertaining to the history of Kashmir have been published in several journals in India and abroad. Besides writing several books on the subject, he has to his credit the monumental work, *A History of Kashmir* which carries a foreword by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

In 1954 he joined the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, as Editor of the illustrated *Kashmir*, which post he had graced for six years. He has been Editor of almost all the journals published by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. Subsequently he was deputed by the Government of India to work as Adviser (Publication) to the Government of Ethiopia.

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